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HOW HARTMUT SUED FOR GUDRUN.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

The charming story of *Gudrun* is a romance of the old heroic period, written by some unknown poet of Austria or Bavaria in the thirteenth century. Next to the *Nibelungen Lied*, it is the most important of the German epic poems. Indeed some of the personae in *Gudrun* are found in the *Lied*, though varying in personal characteristics, probably because they were taken from different legends.

The scenes of *Gudrun* are principally laid along the shores of the North Sea and in Normandy. The men and women in this poem resemble generally those in the *Lied*. The same elemental passions are depicted. The men are brave, vigorous heroes, rejoicing in battle and feats of prowess; the women are beautiful, constant, and courageous. There are many fine delineations of character in the original, as well as vigorous sketches of northern scenery.

The figure of Gudrun stands out in bold relief among the maidens. There are few more beautiful characters, indeed, in the poems of the old heroic period, and it adds to the charm of the epic that she does not suffer the tragic fate of Kriemhild in the *Nibelungen Lied*, but that her constancy and devotion are rewarded by her ultimate reunion with her knightly lover, King Herwig. There at many serious passages, but from the very first then is the conviction that Gudrun and Herwig, in spite of all the dangers and vicissitudes through which they pass, will in the end be reunited. And so it happens. Gudrun's name is always spoken by the people with reverence. "Her courage and constancy were extolled by them, and in after days her fame was as radiant as the stars in the heavens."

G. P. U.

CHICAGO, July 1, 1906.

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CHAPTER I

THE MAIDEN AND THE PRINCELY SUITOR

There once lived in Denmark a mighty King named Hetel, whose fame spread far and wide. His wife Hilda bore him two children, a son and a daughter called Ortwin and Gudrun, who were endowed with such surpassing strength and beauty that as they grew to manhood and womanhood the whole country rang with their praises. Ortwin's master-in-arms was Count Wate, a hero who loved the strife and tumult of battle better than making merry with fair dames, and from him the young prince acquired skill in all knightly exercises. Gudrun grew up so tall and strong that she too could have wielded a sword with credit had such feats been seemly for a maiden, and when the brother and sister stood side by side, all who beheld them declared no sculptor could have wrought anything half so beautiful. Princes came from far and near to seek Gudrun in marriage, but her haughty father, King Hetel, sent them all away, some departing in sorrow, others with bitterness and anger in their hearts. Among those attracted by the fame of Gudrun's beauty was Siegfried, King of Moreland, to whom seven princes did homage as their lord. With a splendid retinue he appeared at Hetel's court to sue for the hand of the maiden, only to share the fate of all her other suitors. Filled with rage and chagrin he took his departure, vowing never to rest till he had wrought vengeance on the proud monarch.

In Normandy at this time there lived a prince named Hartmut who no sooner heard of Gudrun than he too was seized with the desire to make her his wife. His mother, Queen Gerlinda, gladly assented to his wishes, for she was an overbearing and ambitious woman and longed to see her son distinguished above all the other princely wooers. But his father, King Ludwig, said to him:

"How do we know if this Gudrun be as fair as report paints her? Yet were she the very flower of maidenhood, it would profit thee little, for bethink thee how far our realm doth lie from Denmark! Never would her parents permit their only daughter to go so far from them."

Hartmut was not to be moved from his purpose by these remonstrances, however, and Gerlinda said: "Let messengers be despatched thither, and I will bestow gold upon them, besides costly apparel."

But Ludwig, foreboding evil, continued; "King Hetel and his wife Hilda are well known to me. Haughty and overbearing are they both and it is like their daughter will prove the same."

"Be that as it may," replied Hartmut, "I cannot live if Gudrun be not mine. In truth if I may not win her in peaceful fashion then will I go with an army and wrest her from them by force of arms!"

Gerlinda too urged and entreated the King, till at last he yielded and consented to Hartmut's making the attempt. "As to an army," he said, "there is yet time enough for that: let us first see what may be peacefully accomplished."

Accordingly Hartmut chose sixty knights from the noblest houses in the land, to lay his suit before King Hetel; they set out forthwith, attired in rich garments, their spotless armor shining in the sun, while twelve superb sumpter horses followed, led by retainers and laden with gold and silver. Full a hundred days passed before they reached the borders of Hetel's kingdom, where they found a warlike people, most of them going about in helm and mail. They asked where the King was to be found and were shown the way to the royal castle, Hegelingen. As they rode up to it the people came flocking about them full of eager curiosity to gaze at the splendid strangers, while the King ordered sumptuous lodgings to be prepared for them.

On the twelfth day they were summoned before Hetel who, seated on a shining throne and surrounded by his vassals, received them graciously and asked their errand. One of the knights stepped forward and delivered to him the letter containing King Ludwig's suit for his son Hartmut; but scarcely had he learned its contents when his brow darkened and he cried angrily:

"Now, by my faith! doth Ludwig dare to dishonor my crown with such proposals? Let him seek a Queen for his son where'er it pleaseth him, but approach not my throne with his presumptuous desires!"

At these words there was a stir among the Norman knights, and their swords seemed to rattle in their sheaths; but they restrained themselves, and one ventured to reply: "Hartmut is well worthy to be thy son-in-law, O King! for truly there is no braver knight alive!"

Thereupon Queen Hilda, who sat beside the King, lifted her head haughtily and said: "Knowst thou not that thy prince was liegeman to my father, King Hagen, whose fame hath surely reached thine ears? And shall the son of my father's vassal lead our child homeward as his bride?"

Therewith the knights were dismissed, and the next morning they left the court. Full of hope and impatience, Hartmut looked forward to their return, but their appearance, when at last they rode into the courtyard, boded him little good. Reluctantly they made known the answer of Hetel and Hilda to his suit; whereat Ludwig foamed with rage, and Gerlinda burst into a storm of angry tears, but Hartmut asked one of the knights whether the maiden was really so beautiful as it was said.

"In truth, my lord," he replied, "so fair is she that he who once beholds her must ever bear her image in his heart."

"Now may God chastise King Hetel for the affront he hath dealt to me and to my house! But for the maiden, she shall yet be mine, I swear!"

These words gladdened Gerlinda's heart. "Ha!" she cried, trembling with passion, "may I but live to behold her here!"

CHAPTER II

THE CONTEST

Zealand, the neighboring country to Denmark, was ruled by a young prince named Herwig, who also came to woo the fair Gudrun, but Hetel rejected him as haughtily as he had rejected all the rest. Nevertheless Herwig tarried for some months at the court, where, from time to time he might behold the maiden; but although he often renewed his suit, the King's answer was ever the same.

One day a prince arrived at the royal castle followed by a glittering train. He would not give his name, and as he advanced no suit, Hetel received him kindly and prepared a feast in his honor. So it came to pass that he soon found an opportunity of seeing Gudrun, and contrived to make known to her that he was Hartmut, and had come to Denmark for her sake alone. The maiden pitied the gallant young hero, whose appearance pleased her well, though she had no wish to wed him, and she besought him to depart at once, for, should Hetel discover who he was, he would surely slay him. Sorrowfully Hartmut left the court. Yet he did not abandon his purpose, but bent all his energies toward raising an army to revenge himself upon King Hetel.

Again he would have renewed his own suit; but the King sternly forbade him ever again to speak of it, whereupon he resolved to invade the land with an armed force to, prove to the haughty monarch that he too was a mighty prince. Accordingly, on a dark night not long thereafter when all within the castle of Hegelingen lay wrapped in deepest slumber, Herwig landed with a band of stout warriors, and at daybreak, the warder on the tower discovered the enemy close beneath the walls.



HOW HARTMUT SUED FOR GUDRUN.

Herwig was rejoiced when the splendid stranger went upon his way, for he had feared in him a successful rival.

"To arms' he thundered from the tower;
The trump the silence broke,
And strident blast of larum horns
The startled sleepers woke.
With flying hair the women all
To one another clung;
Or flocking to the windows, there
Their hands in terror wrung;
While calm in danger, knight and man
To steed and armor sprung."

When Hetel saw by the device on the banners that it was Herwig who led the foe, he was secretly pleased that the hero should thus seek to win the maid by force of arms. This was after his own heart, and Herwig could not have hit upon a better plan to obtain his favor. With his wife and Gudrun he stood at a window and watched the gallant struggle that was in progress before the castle, expecting to see his knights soon scatter the followers of this fiery wooer; but great was his consternation when he beheld Herwig gaining step by step. Wherever the rejected suitor's plume waved, wherever his flashing sword circled, there was the fray hottest, and many of Hetel's stoutest warriors fell before him. Splendid was Herwig to look upon in battle: the helms of all who approached him were lit with fiery sparks, while their armor was speedily adorned with crimson bands. Even Gudrun gazed on him with admiring eyes, terrible as the sight of the battle was to her.

"Now," thought Hetel, is Herwig worthy of my sword"; and donning his armor, down he strode, only to find his men being irresistibly forced back within the castle. Already the clash of arms re-echoed from the vaulted ceiling, armor crashed against armor in the onset. Valiantly King Hetel dashed among his knights, but all his efforts were powerless to check their retreat. At last the two princes came face to face, the gray-haired hero of a hundred battles and the young warrior bent on winning equal fame. Blows that would have slain many a stout champion fell thick and fast on helm and

shield, yet undismayed and unconquered fast they stood, while sparks shot forth in fiery showers, and links of mail fell tinkling to the stone floor. At last Hetel stepped back a pace and said breathlessly: "He who does not wish me for a friend surely is no good friend," and therewith rushed once more upon the young hero; and fiercer than ever raged the combat.

Terror-stricken, Gudrun watched them until at last she could bear it no longer. Seizing a shield she hastened down and threw herself between the two knights, whereat Herwig lowered his sword and gazed joyously at the stately maiden.

"Peace, peace! my father, in God's name!" she implored. "Let the struggle wait until I have asked Herwig where his dearest friend may be."

"Oh, thou knowest well," cried Herwig. "But I will give no peace till thou dost grant me leave to speak with thee within the castle. No evil have I in my heart, for unarmed will I enter."

Accordingly at Gudrun's desire, the heroes laid aside their arms and entered the castle together in peace. Then Herwig approached Gudrun once more to plead his suit, and Gudrun answered: "What maid could scorn so valiant a hero? Truly, most noble Herwig, there is no damsel living who could hold thee more dear than I, and if my parents do consent, then will I gladly evermore with thee abide."

Then Herwig besought the King and Queen for the hand of Gudrun and they, turning to their daughter, asked whether this betrothal would be pleasing to her. She replied that she would choose Herwig for her husband before all other men. So Hetel, whose heart had been quite won by the valor of the noble young hero, led Gudrun to him and joined their hands together. Then all the great lords and vassals were summoned to the hall, and in their presence the King once more asked Gudrun if she would have Herwig for her husband.

"Never could I wish for nobler lord," she answered. So they were betrothed, and a great feast was held to celebrate the joyful event.

When the festivities were over, Herwig wished to take Gudrun home with him as his bride; but Queen Hilda besought him to wait till the following springtime, since her daughter was still so young. In the meantime she would teach her much that it befitted a future queen to know and she would also have time to prepare a rich store of marriage gifts. Herwig agreed to this though with great reluctance; soon thereafter, bidding a sorrowful farewell to his betrothed, he returned to his own land, little suspecting what dire results were to follow the postponement of the nuptials.

CHAPTER III

SIEGFRIED'S REVENGE

The news that Herwig had won the heart and hand of the beautiful Gudrun soon spread to Moreland and filled King Siegfried, still smarting from his own scornful rejection, with deadly hatred against the fortunate suitor.

"Now will I kindle for thee, Sir Herwig," he shouted, "a wedding torch that shall light thy whole land!"

Forthwith he had twenty ships made ready and filled with chosen knights. Toward the end of May they reached the coast of Zealand, and then began such a burning and slaying as never had been known before. Herwig at once rode forth to meet his fierce enemy, and a long and desperate battle followed. Red was the soil with the blood of the slain and bravely did Herwig and his warriors fight, but at last they were forced to yield to superior numbers and take refuge in a castle near by, where they were safe for a time from the enemy. Siegfried laid siege to it; but one of Herwig's knights succeeded in stealing through the enemy's camp by night and, hastening to Hegelingen, told King Hetel of the ravages Siegfried had committed in Zealand and of Herwig's dangerous situation. When Gudrun heard these evil tidings she besought her father to hasten to the aid of her betrothed.

"That will I gladly do, my daughter," cried the King, "Herwig shall see 'twas not in vain I swore faith with him, and straightway shall all our friends be summoned hither."

Messengers were sent out in haste bidding his vassals join him prepared for war without delay; and soon a host of gallant knights assembled with their followers all eager for battle. First came old Wate, that dauntless champion who never yet had known fear and of whose prowess great tales were told. Then followed Morung, Irolt, Horand, and the aged

Frute. Had these heroes been in the royal castle when Herwig sought to storm it, there might well have been a different ending to the fight! The King's son Ortwin also donned his armor and begged permission to accompany the expedition. He longed to prove his valor for the first time and aid in avenging his sister's wrong.

Hetel at once took ship with all his forces and soon reached Zealand. When Siegfried heard of their coming he set forth to meet them; then there followed a fierce conflict wherein many a good helm and shield were shattered, but neither side could claim a victory. With morning light the struggle was renewed, but again the evening of the bloody day brought no decisive result. So it went on for twelve long days, but when on the thirteenth morning Siegfried surveyed his dwindling forces, he knew he might no longer venture to wage open warfare; he retired with the remnant of his army to a strong castle which was entirely surrounded by water. Here at first he thought himself quite safe from Hetel's swords and spears, but when he found the enemy closely besieging his retreat he heartily wished himself back in his own land. After sending messengers to Hegelingen to relieve the suspense of the Queen and Gudrun, Hetel swore a solemn oath never to stir from that spot till Siegfried should surrender,—a rash vow, that brought much sorrow to him, as we shall see.

CHAPTER IV

HARTMUT CAPTURES GUDRUN

King Ludwig had many spies in Zealand and word of Hetel's vow was soon brought to him. He asked if the castle held by Siegfried was a strong one, and learning that it could well sustain a year's siege, he hastened joyfully to his wife and Hartmut, saying: "At last the hour of our revenge is nigh!"

Then he told them how Hetel with all his bravest knights had gone to Zealand to aid Herwig, leaving his own land but poorly guarded. Gerlinda was overjoyed when she found the King was bent upon avenging the affront that had been offered her, and brought gold from her own store to aid in arming the knights. Hartmut too was rejoiced, and set about placing himself and his followers in readiness with a will—though with him it was not so much a question of revenge as of winning the maiden he so dearly loved. At last all was ready, and Ludwig's army embarked and put out to sea.

After a voyage of many days, the eager warriors one morning spied the gleaming turrets of Matalan, the castle occupied by Queen Hilda and her daughter, and landing under cover of a wood succeeded in approaching close to the walls without being seen by the warders. Ludwig wished to begin the assault at once, but Hartmut persuaded him to wait until Ile had made one more attempt to win Gudrun by peaceful means. For this purpose he despatched two wealthy Counts with a message to her, but when she learned their errand, she replied:

"Say to your master I am betrothed to King Herwig and never will I break faith with him!"

The Counts warned her that Hartmut's love was so great he was ready to carry her away by force if she would not consent to go with him of her own will; whereat Gudrun's knights laughed scornfully, so sure were they of the strength of

the castle and their own good swords, and little suspecting that an army was concealed in the wood. The messengers were dismissed and costly garments offered them, with wine in gold and silver drinking-horns, but they haughtily refused the gifts.

"Ha!" cried the Danes angrily, "if ye do scorn King Hetel's wine, then shall blood be poured for you, forsooth!"

The Counts rode back to Hartmut and told him what had passed.

"Alas!" he cried, "that such words have been spoken! No longer is there left me any choice."

The battle standards were unfurled and Hartmut advanced upon the castle with his fellows. Queen Hilda was overjoyed when she first beheld him, for she thought some good fortune had brought King Betel back. Soon, however, the device upon the banners showed her it was Hartmut who approached, and she ordered the gates of the castle to be made fast. Her knights, thirsting for battle, rushed forth; but scarcely had they met the foe when Ludwig issued from the forest with a second force, and dashing among the unlucky Danes, mowed them down, as corn falls before the reapers. The two soon forced the castle gates and planted their victorious banners on the battlements of Matalan. Hartmut found Gudrun in the great hall, her cheeks pale with terror.

"Thou didst scorn me once," he said to her, love and anger struggling within him, "and for that should I scorn to make captive any here, but rather let all be slain!"

Gudrun turned away weeping and cried, "Alas! my father, couldst thou but know what hath befallen thy poor child!"

Terrible ravages were committed in the castle by Ludwig's followers, which Hartmut was powerless to prevent, though he would not suffer it to be burned. Gudrun, with thirty of her women, was taken captive to the ships; and after pillaging and laying waste the country for three days, the

Normans again embarked laden with spoils; the anchors were raised, and on the fourth morning the fleet set sail for home.

CHAPTER V

THE EVIL TIDINGS

King Hetel, who had been joined by Herwig and his warriors, still besieged the castle within whose walls Siegfried defied all their assaults. One day messengers from home arrived, and when Hetel saw them coming he hastened joyfully to meet them crying, "Fell me quickly, good sirs, how fares it with my wife and my dear daughter Gudrun?"

The messengers' glances fell as one of them said sorrowfully: "Great is the evil that hath befallen my lord! Burned are thy cities, and thy castles ruined. Full a thousand brave knights have fallen fighting for thy house. Thy treasures hath the enemy despoiled, and thy daughter Gudrun is taken captive!"

At these words the King laid hold of him fiercely, saying: "Thou speakest in frenzy, man! Who could have done this? Speak, speak, I say!"

"'Twas Ludwig of Normandy and his son Hartmut, my lord," replied the messenger, who suddenly appeared before Matalan with a mighty army.

Then the King cried aloud and tore his long gray beard in anguish. Quickly the news spread through the camp, and the heroes Herwig and Wate, Irolt, Frute, and Horand, hastened to his side. In bitter grief he cried:

"To you, faithful comrades, I pour out my woe!
On my house bath dire evil been wrought by the foe:
Alas! but ill-guarded we left our own shore,
Its gallant defenders shall guard it no more.
My castles are ruined, my country laid waste,
My liegemen lie slaughtered, my daughter disgraced;
In bondage, alas! must that noble maid sigh
Whom I to the Norman as bride did deny!"

Tears streamed down Herwig's cheeks when he heard these dreadful tidings, and all were moved by the grief of the father and lover of Gudrun. Count Wate alone remained calm.

"Take heart, my lords," he said, "for the day shall yet come when our sorrow will be turned to joy again. Cease these laments, I pray, lest Siegfried hear the sound thereof and take delight in your affliction."

Hetel strove to regain his composure and asked mournfully what was to be done. Wate replied: "Now must we press Siegfried so closely on all sides that he will gladly seize an offer of alliance with us. This done, we shall have his aid and be free to pursue the base marauders!"

This counsel cheered all the knights, and the next morning they began such a furious assault on the castle as Siegfried never yet had been forced to endure. After many knights on both sides had fallen, Irolt shouted up to the walls: "If thou wouldst have peace with us then ask it of King Hetel, else shall no man of you go back alive to his own land!"

Siegfried answered: "I may not in honor sue for peace to any man. And thinkest thou to conquer us? 'T' is but more heroes sent to death on either side."

Then Frute raised his voice and said: "Swear thou wilt ever abide by us with loyal service, and thou mayst go hence in peace." And Siegfried, together with all his knights, raised their hands and swore it.

Then the gates of the castle were thrown open, Siegfried and Hetel clasped hands, and the rest of the heroes did the same; so all were friends who but a short time before had been fighting to the death. Hetel now opened his heart to Siegfried and told him of the calamity that had befallen them.

And Siegfried said to Herwig:

"Even as I have hated thee, that thou didst win the love of Gudrun, whom I too would fain have wed, so now will I loyally aid thee to win her back from Hartmut. Had ye not

burned my ships, then might we have pursued the Norman thieves without delay."

"There is a band of pilgrims near the shore," said Wate, "with ten large ships and many smaller vessels. These they must lend us, whether they will or no!"

This plan was hailed with joy. Taking with him an hundred knights, Wate forthwith brought the ships to land, while the pilgrims, whose treasures were safely stored on shore, were pacified with promises of a speedy return. The next morning Hetel, with all his companions and followers, embarked, and a favoring wind soon bore them out to sea.

CHAPTER VI

THE BATTLE ON THE WULPENSAND

Ludwig and Hartmut meanwhile had reached a green and thickly wooded island called the Wulpensand, where they decided to make a camp and rest them from their labors for a space. Often did Gudrun gaze sadly out across the water, the tears streaming unheeded down her cheeks.

Some days had passed thus when about noon white sails were seen upon the far horizon. Word was brought at once to Ludwig and Hartmut, and they hastened to the shore. Soon they distinguished crosses on the sails and supposed them to be pilgrim ships. But after a time, Ludwig said: "Yon ships do gleam and sparkle as they were filled with shining stars—'tis from helm and shield and spear tip! Up, warriors! Up and arm you to receive them!"

Instantly the camp was in confusion. All flew to arms, and soon the shore was lined with shouting warriors eager for battle. Ludwig's banner floated upon the breeze, and he shouted: "Now, by my faith! Our former work was but child's play to what now lies before us! Stand fast, bold knights, and richly will I reward you!"

Nearer and nearer came the hostile fleet bearing Hetel and Herwig and Siegfried with all their men, till at last the two armies were within reach of each other's spears. Then there arose such a clashing dud splintering of javelins and arrows that the noise of the waves was completely drowned. Hastily Hetel's men clambered into their boats and rowed ashore. Wate sprang into the water up to his breast and made his way to land, Hetel, Herwig, Ortwin, Frute and their brave men following; and soon the sea far out was red with blood from innumerable wounds. Ludwig recognized Wate and hurled his spear at the mighty champion, but he caught it fairly on his shield and it broke, the splinters flying far mild wide. As he

gained the shore, he dealt King Ludwig a blow with his sword that sent him reeling backward; and there with King Hetel's people won to land and the fight began in earnest.

Till nightfall the battle raged, when neither side had prevailed. Then the weary heroes sought a few hours' repose, but at dawn the battle trumpets once more sounded and the strife began anew. Backward and forward rolled the tide of battle, pausing now and then, only to burst out more fiercely than before. At last the two Kings, Hetel and Ludwig, met. Hetel fought like a lion robbed of its young, and his sword whistled frightfully through the air as the blows fell fast and furious on his adversary's helm and shield. But Ludwig too was a mighty champion, grown old in battle: at last he smote King Hetel so powerfully that he fell dead before him. At this a wild shout went up from the Normans, and the news soon spread to Gudrun's tent, whereupon the poor maiden with a cry of anguish sank unconscious to the ground.

Wate fought like an infuriated wild beast, and many of the enemy fell before his sword; but in spite of all their efforts they could gain no real advantage, and darkness fell once more without Herwig's having succeeded in rescuing his bride. Watch-fires were lit, and the two armies were so close to each other that the gleam of their armor could be plainly seen.

That evening Ludwig took counsel with Hartmut in his tent. He feared Wate's strength and deemed it best to retire under cover of night, while the drums and war-trumpets should sound loudly as it in joyous anticipation of the morrow's conflict and their confidence of victory, and thereby drown all mound of preparation. This plan was forthwith adopted; the ships were hurriedly laden and made ready to depart, and the fair captives led thither after having been warned as they valued their lives to make no outcry. Ludwig's forces had become so diminished that he was forced to leave many of his ships behind for lack of men to man them. His stratagem was successful, however; the Normans put safely

out to sea in the darkness, and a strong breeze bore them swiftly away.

In the morning a dense mist enveloped land and sea, but Wate turned to continue the battle and at the sound of his horn the knights sprang once more to arms. Just then the sun broke through the clouds, and lo! the whole country stretched bare before their bewildered gaze—the enemy had vanished! The ground was strewn with corpses, broken weapons, and torn banners, while near the shore some empty ships lay tossing on the waves. At this, such a fury of rage seized Wate that few dared approach him. Ortwin cried: "Let us pursue them with all speed!"

But Frute, who had been watching the wind replied: "Twere useless now, my lord. Full thirty miles have they the start of us, nor with our remnant of an army may we venture a pursuit."

"Then will we take vengeance on the living through the dead!" shouted grim Irolt. "Unburied shall they lie to feed the ravens!"

But Herwig reproved him, saying: "Nay, comrade, that must never be! Rather let us dig ample graves and bury friend and foe together."

"Dead foes no longer hatred claim; Grudge not the dead true hero's fame!"

This was done, and after all the slain had been consigned to earth, with heavy hearts the heroes once more embarked and set sail for home.

Soon Queen Hilda's castle rose before them from the sea, whereat groans of anguish burst from many a mail-clad breast. Ortwin cried: "Alas! how can I appear before my mother? Not only have we failed to deliver Gudrun, but now my father lies beneath the stones of Wulpensand! Herwig too shrank from breaking the evil tidings to Queen Hilda, nor were any of their comrades willing to undertake the task. But when

they had reached the shore Wate gruffly said: "It is useless to attempt to conceal the truth from the Queen," and himself rode to the castle, looking so grim and forbidding that all who beheld him shrank in terror. But Hilda, who had seen him coming and had also marked the sadly diminished fleet upon the strand, hastened anxiously to meet him and asked him in trembling accents for her lord.

"I will not deceive thee, lady," said the hero, his rough features clouded with grief; "the King is slain, and with him the greater part of our comrades"; and therewith he told her of the battle on the island.

Quickly the news spread, and from the castle arose loud wailing and sounds of woe, to which all the heroes added their lamentations. The whole court was plunged into grief, and Wate alone retained his firmness.

"Peace—peace—my friends! No complaints nor sighs will ever open the King's grave or bring back Gudrun to us. With the handful of warriors that are left us, we can do nothing now, 'tis true, but ere-long a younger generation will be of age to bear arms, and then our day of reckoning will come!"

CHAPTER VII

GUDRUN'S DANGER

As Ludwig's fleet drew near the coast of Normandy the gleaming turrets of his royal castle shone out across the green water; far into the distance stretched fruitful fields and wooded heights, bathed in bright sunlight. Then the King led his captive to the ship's deck, her trembling companions following, and said kindly to her, "Maiden, behold the land of which thou art one day to be Queen!"

Hartmut fixed his ardent gaze upon the fair prisoner, hoping she would at last look with favor on him, but Gudrun answered firmly:

"Rather would I choose death than wed with Hartmut! 'Twas he who brought all this sorrow upon me through his invasion of our kingdom, and but for him my noble father who now on yonder island sleeps in his grave, had been yet alive."

This enraged the King; but controlling himself, he told her she must reconcile herself to what had happened, since it could not now be altered, and she must choose between royal honors and a shameful captivity.

Undauntedly the maiden replied: "I have sworn faith with Herwig, and death alone shall free me from my troth."

Scarcely had she uttered the words when the fierce Norman King seized her by the hair and flung her into the sea. Hartmut sprang forward to save his beloved, but in vain. For a moment her fair hair floated on the water, then he plunged after her and both disappeared below the surface. Anxiously those on the ship gazed downward, fearing that the King's son, too, would find a watery grave. Soon he rose again, however, supporting the maiden on his strong arm; and the ship's folk, who had already sprung into a boat, drew both to safety.

Hartmut gave Gudrun into the hands of her women, ordering them to take her below and provide her with dry garments without delay. Then confronting his father with glowing cheeks, he demanded sternly:

"Wherefore wouldst thou have drowned her who is more dear to me than life itself? By my faith, had another dared what thou hast done, I would have paid him with my sword."

Angrily the King answered:

"Boy, speak not thus to me! I am grown old in honors, and honor will I have from thee till I am dead. Therefore warn Gudrun that she heed her words in future when she hath speech with me!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE RECEPTION

Soon the fleet reached the shore, and Hartmut sent messengers to his mother to bid her prepare to receive Gudrun as became her rank. Gerlinda was overjoyed when she learned that the daughter of that haughty monarch who had once offered her such an affront was with the Normans on the ships, and ordered the costliest apparel to be made ready, though rather, it must be said, to display her own riches than to fulfil the wishes of her son.

Now Hartmut had a sister named Ortrun, who rejoiced in the thought that Gudrun would be a beloved sister to her, and joyfully assisted in all the preparations for the festivities. Three days were thus occupied, and on the fourth morning a splendid procession wended its way down from the royal castle to the shore. Gerlinda and Ortrun came first, mounted on white palfreys and arrayed in magnificent robes of silk interwoven with gold, while behind them rode a glittering train of knights, all sumptuously attired.

Joyous strains of music penetrated to the ships, but they fell on Gudrun's ear like the harsh cry of the screech-owl. Soon she with her maidens was conducted to the land.

The broken-hearted royal maid
With tottering steps was seen—
Shrinking from Hartmut's proffered aid—
Approach the haughty Queen.

Ortrun, impatient, longed to make
Her loving welcome known,
For to her seemed this stranger maid
Like sister all her own.

But as she joyously draws nigh,
With sinking heart she sees
In Gudrun's eyes the bitter tears—
Then all her rapture flees.

They closely clasp each other's hand—
A kiss—and then they part:
No words they speak, but in their eyes
Each reads the other's heart.

Then Queen Gerlinda turned to her
With falsely flattering look
And would have sought a greeting kiss—
This Gudrun would not brook.

"Approach me not!" she proudly said,
"Thou cause of all my woe!
For me to suffer thy embrace
Were worse than crime, I trow!"

Gerlinda seemed not to hear these words, but her heart swelled within her with rage. Tents were now pitched on the green sunny meadow, and Hartmut spared no pains to please and cheer Gudrun with music and tilting, but her tears flowed unceasingly, nor could all his efforts avail to comfort her. She sat with her head on Ortrun's shoulder,

Ortrun wept with her.

Moved by her sorrow, Hartmut put an end to the games and gave the signal for departure. At the castle Gudrun found sumptuous apartments prepared for her and her maidens, but she felt as if she were entering a tomb; in truth, it would have been a welcome thought to her could she have felt that never again should she awake.

CHAPTER IX

GUDRUN'S TEST

Many months passed during which Hartmut omitted no proof of devotion to his fair captive, but never did the King's daughter cease to think of him whose ring of gold she wore upon her finger.

One day Gerlinda said to Gudrun in the presence of her son: "When wilt thou relent, perverse one? Delay no longer, but give thy hand to Hartmut, for, of a truth, he is the peer of any king alive!"

For answer Gudrun turned toward her and asked: "Wouldst thou, Lady Gerlinda, take for thy husband one who had caused the death of so many of thine own people?"

Gerlinda, knowing how her son's heart was set on Gudrun, replied: "Nay, dwell not on what is past, thou foolish maid! Wed him who loves thee well, and gladly will I yield to thee my crown."

Gudrun's eyes filled with tears and her cheeks grew red, as she answered:

"Can there be love where treacherous deeds
Of bloody crimes have sown the seeds?
The bitter tears mine eyes so drown,
They dim the glitter of a crown.
For freedom thirsts my soul for aye,
Of freedom dream I night and day:
Naught but a captive I'll remain,
Nor wed him whom my sire hath slain!"

She left the hall weeping.

Hartmut sprang up angrily, saying: "Enough of this! Since she ever doth scorn me, I will no longer show her favor!"

This filled Gerlinda with secret joy, for now at least she thought the haughty princess would be in her power, and following Hartmut she said to him: "My son, 'tis beyond thy skill to deal with Gudrun. So stubborn a child can be brought to better ways only by those of more experience. Leave her to me and thou shalt soon find her pride humbled."

"Heaven grant it!" cried Hartmut. "Easily might I force her to be mine, yet my heart rebels against such harshness."

"Trust me,—all shall be as thou dost wish," replied Gerlinda, eagerly.

"Fail not to deal with her as becomes her rank," he continued, "and forget not that the poor maid hath had much cause for grief!"

The next morning Hartmut took leave of his parents and left the court, but ere he departed he sought his mother once more and charged her to treat Gudrun kindly. Then he rode forth with his followers to drown remembrance of his love and sorrow in the dangers of battle, bearing with him the hope that Gudrun's heart would turn to him at last. Had he but known the evil thoughts in Gerlinda's mind, he would never have departed. Scarcely was he out of sight, however, when the Queen gave full vent to her malice. Seeking Gudrun, she said to her: "Since thou dost scorn the love and favor of a King, forsooth, thou shalt do menial service and taste beggar's fare!"

"Alas!" replied Gudrun, "I am at thy mercy and must bear whate'er thou dost inflict on me. But know this, Queen! that naught shall avail to shake my loyalty."

"Then," continued Gerlinda, "shall thy maidens also serve as drudges for the sake of thy loyalty: heat the ovens, carry wood, and sweep up dust and litter. Oh, I will soon bend thy stubborn pride, I promise thee!"

Gudrun was greatly distressed that her maidens, who were all of noble birth, should be made to suffer for her sake, but she was powerless to prevent it.

What the Queen had threatened soon came to pass. Gudrun was separated from her companions and forced to perform the lowest tasks, but when Gerlinda one day asked her mockingly how her life at the court now pleased her, she replied simply: "The good God who gave me constancy, granted me also the strength to bear the undeserved trouble it hath brought upon me."

Thus three years went by, and Hartmut returned at last from his wanderings, rich in fame and honors. Full of hope, he rode joyfully into the castle; but what was his horror to behold the high-born princess in the garb of a menial!

"Alas! my mother, what hast thou done?" he cried, and giving his hand to Gudrun, he said sorrowfully: "Believe me, most noble maiden, 'tis through no fault of mine that this shame hath befallen thee! Yet wilt thou but look upon my suit with favor, then all thy sorrow shall be turned to joy."

But Gudrun answered: "Already have I made it plain to thee that my heart is his to whom my vows are plighted. Go! leave me to the misery thine honor should have spared me!"

Then Hartmut reminded her of his rescue of her from the water at peril of his life, as proof of his devotion. "And wilt thou leave such love still unrewarded?" he asked.

"Was it not thou," replied Gudrun, "that tore me from my home and all I loved? Didst thou not slay my father? And yet for all these wrongs thou dost expect my thanks?"

"Have it as thou wilt, then!" he cried angrily, "and abide in thy misery! 'Twas no act of mine that brought it upon thee, yet it wellnigh seems thou dost deserve thy shame!"

But it was not long till his love for Gudrun again awoke, and he determined to make one more effort to win her heart.

CHAPTER X

ORTRUN

Hartmut now went to his sister and said: "I pray thee, comfort Gudrun and be a sister to her, so many bitter griefs hath she been forced to bear. Seek, too, to turn her heart toward me by kindness. Canst thou but do this, my sister, then will I owe thee thanks so long as I do live!"

Ortrun wept for joy at these words, and embracing her brother fondly, replied: "Happy indeed shall I be once more to see thy love. Our mother forbade me to approach her, and great grief was this to me."

Then said Hartmut: "Henceforth thou shalt share all thy joys with her, dear Ortrun. Perchance if we make her happy here with us her heart may yet be mine."

Joyfully Ortrun hastened to Gudrun and besought her love and friendship, telling her the good news that hereafter by Hartmut's desire they were to share the same chamber; and the two royal maidens acknowledged they had missed and longed for one another.

Happier days dawned for Gudrun. She spent all her time with Ortrun, whose only thought was to cheer her sorrowful companion. When Gudrun talked of her home and people, she listened with loving interest or shared her tears. She would gladly have welcomed the Danish princess as her sister-in-law and lost no opportunity to speak good of Hartmut, whom she dearly loved. But as time went on, she saw more and more clearly that her friend's constancy was unalterable; and it troubled her greatly, for she foresaw more evil days for Gudrun. So the Winter passed, and the Summer, and another Winter drew nigh.

Then Gerlinda persuaded her son to ask Gudrun for the last time to share his throne. So he went to her and besought

her once more to be his Queen. Again she refused; whereat Hartmut asked her if he was not as worthy of her love as Herwig, but she only said: "Herwig hath my promise, and I will not break it."

Hartmut assured her that Herwig must have already broken faith with her, since for all these years he had allowed his sword to rust in its sheath and had made no effort to rescue her.

"In truth I know not why this should be," she answered; "yet even if he hath forgotten me, still will I be true to him till death."

So Hartmut went back to Gerlinda and said: "Naught will alter the maiden's resolution. I can do no more; wherefore take her and deal with her as thou wilt."

Then he warned his knights to be on their guard. "For if the friends and kindred of Gudrun be as steadfast as she hath proved herself," he said, "it yet may chance an army shall invade our land."

CHAPTER XI

GUDRUN'S TRIALS

From that day fresh hardships fell to the lot of the King's daughter; yet when the enraged Queen ordered her to return once more to her drudgery, saying it was only pride that caused her to refuse Hartmut's hand, Gudrun answered quietly: "God knows my heart, and if it be His will that I should suffer thus, it is not for me to rebel, but to do all thou dost require of me, so that it touch not the faith I have sworn with Herwig!

To this the Queen replied: "Then shall it be thy daily task to wash garments, and take heed that thou art not found idle a single hour from early morn till nightfall!"

And this the maiden was forced to do, though she knew nothing of such work; nor did Gerlinda fail to greet her with taunts and jeers whenever she saw her. But Hartmut went about silently, with never a friendly word to any man, for his heart was sore within him.

So diligently did Gudrun apply herself to her task, however, that soon it would have been hard to find a more skilful washerwoman than the high-born maiden, but her companions' hearts were wellnigh broken when they saw the heavy labor their beloved mistress was compelled to perform. One of them, indeed, named Heregart, proved disloyal to her and wedded a Norman duke, the King's cup-bearer, whereby she found favor at court, and all went well with her, but the rest of the damsels, like Gudrun, remained true to their own land and to one another through all their trials and sufferings. One of them, the Princess Hildburg, was so grieved at Gudrun's hard lot, and wept and lamented so bitterly over it, that Gerlinda at last observed it and maliciously said to her: "Since thou takest Gudrun's fate so much to heart, go thou and take her place when she is weary."

"Gladly would I bear all her burdens, if such might be!" replied Hildburg. "In God's name, madame, put not the maiden to such shame! Remember that her father wore a crown. Yet I, who am also a prince's child, would rejoice if I might only share her lot." "Now, by my faith, that shalt thou surely do, in payment for thy bold words, thou malapert!" cried Gerlinda, furiously. "Through the snow shalt thou go with Gudrun daily to the shore, and I will see to it thou hast work enough to weary thee, I warrant!"

Gerlinda little knew that instead of inflicting a heavy punishment upon the loyal maiden, she had made her happier than she had been for many a day. Scarcely could she wait for evening to come, and when at last she spied Gudrun wearily returning from her day's labor, she ran to meet her and they wept in one another's arms. Then Hildburg said, "I have persuaded that monster to let me go with thee to the shore and share thy toil."

"May God reward thy loyalty, dear Hildburg!" cried Gudrun, embracing her once more, "if I but have thee to talk with while I am at my work, the hours will seem short indeed!"

So the next morning, and thereafter, they went together with their baskets to the shore, and though the work was hard and painful, their love for each other sustained them and enabled them to endure their sufferings patiently.

CHAPTER XII

ON THE WULPENSAND

All this time Gudrun's mother, Queen Hilda, as well as her lover, brother, and all her friends, supposed that Hartmut had forced her to become his wife; but none the less were they firmly resolved to avenge the outrage and bring her home again. With this in view the Queen had seven large strong vessels built, and two and twenty smaller ships; a vast store of armor and weapons was also made ready, and at last one day she summoned old Irolt to the castle and told him it was her wish to erect a cloister on the Wulpensand in honor of her dead husband, and after this was done, her loyal subjects should undertake the voyage to Normandy.

"The day of retribution is in truth at hand, O Queen!" replied Irolt, "for a brave and stalwart generation hath grown to manhood; methinks 'twere well to summon forthwith thy friends from far and near."

The Queen was rejoiced and hastened to send messengers first of all to Herwig of Zealand, who welcomed them gladly, for he surmised their errand.

"Most noble Herwig," said they, "the time has come to avenge Queen Hilda's wrong, and in this she counts upon thy aid."

"Nor have I forgotten Gudrun, who was pledged to me in solemn troth and whom Hartmut, in defiance of all right and custom hath held captive all these years. Say to thy Queen I will join her speedily with my knights, and that never yet was war so welcome to my heart."

Then the messengers bore the news to the Queen's other friends and allies, to Horant, Morung, Frute, and Wate, and all promised to be ready. When Hilda heard this she sent for her son Ortwin, who long had yearned for this day to

come. He was in the forest hawking when the messengers arrived, and rode eagerly to meet them. They soon made known to him what had passed, whereupon he snatched the hood from the falcon's head and let it go free, for now, thought he, "'tis a question of that higher game, for which I have longed so often." Joyfully he hurried to his mother and sent out word to his followers to assemble with all haste.

Swift messengers the tidings bore
With speed throughout the land;
Ended were now the sounds of woe,
Each warrior grasped his brand.
The battle steeds were panoplied,
The flags their folds outflung,
While all along the western shore,
Forests of masts upsprung.

At last all the preparations were complete, and the heroes sought Queen Hilda and prayed her for leave to depart on their journey. Invoking God's blessing upon them she bade them farewell, and, after a last tearful embrace of her son, turned to them, saying: "Watch over him faithfully, my loyal friends! Brave and valiant I well know him to be; yet he is but young and inexperienced in warfare. Keep ever at his side, therefore, should he press forward too boldly in the tumult of battle."

The heroes boarded the ships, already laden with their arms and stores, while a great throng of people gathered on the shore to watch their departure. The anchors were weighed, the white sails shaken out, and, aided by a favoring gale, the fleet put out to sea. Women waved farewells to their departing husbands; from the ships arose the sound of trumpet and drum, while the heroes lustily chanted a war song as out they sailed farther and farther into the shining sea. Wate took the lead and steered the fleet for the Wulpensand. After a voyage of several days the green island appeared before them; but before they could reach it a great storm arose. Mountainous waves came rushing down upon them, the ribs of the ships creaked and

groaned, and the tall masts bent under the fury of the gale. Dark as night it grew, while red lightning flashes darted from the inky clouds and seemed to strike the water.

"Hark!" cried Horant. "Dost hear that sound of wailing? Methinks King Hetel finds no rest in his unconsecrated grave."

These words fired Ortwin with desire to carry peace to his father's soul, and tearing a cross from the mast he leaped with it into the boiling flood which closed angrily over him. His comrades gave him up for lost, but soon, by the glare of the lightning, they saw him rise to the surface, and parting the waves with strong arms, he succeeded, by God's mercy, in gaining the shore of the Wulpensand. There he planted the cross upon the mound that marked the warrior's place of burial, and knelt in prayer beside it. As the vivid flashes revealed the noble form of the beautiful youth to those upon the ship, he seemed like a heavenly vision, bathed in the fiery glow. The sight restored the sinking courage of many a knight, and with new strength they bent to the work of battling with the waves. Soon the thunder lessened, the wind died away, and, as the golden sunlight broke again from out the clouds, their vessels reached the shore in safety.

For many days the heroes remained on the island praying for the souls of the departed, for few were there in all the host who had not some kin or friend to mourn among the slain. The thought of these served to steel their courage, and as Siegfried, who had been reminded of his oath, had by this time joined them with a large number of ships and men, the whole fleet put out again to sea.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TALE OF HAGEN AND THE GRIFFIN

The way was far to Normandy, and time often hung heavily on the hands of the heroes, who were longing for action.

Sometimes, when the wind failed, a number of them would assemble on the deck, while gray-bearded warriors related many an adventure of their own or their forefathers'. Thus it chanced one day that several of the younger knights gathered about Frute and besought him to tell them the tale of Hagen and the Griffin. Frute agreed, and, seating himself upon a pile of armor, leaned back against the mast while his hearers formed a circle about him on the deck. The sun was setting and its ruddy gleams were reflected from the mirror-like surface of the water upon the face of the aged hero, as he began:

"Once upon a time there ruled in Ireland a King called Sigeband, whose wife bore him a son. He was named Hagen, and while yet a child all who saw him marvelled at his strength. By the time he had reached his seventh year he refused to remain any longer in the women's care, but desired only to be with men and learn to wield arms. Sigeband encouraged his son's wishes, and the boy soon became so skilled in the use of spear and sword that even the oldest warriors were amazed and declared that never before had such a child been seen. Now it chanced that the Queen one day was sitting upon the battlements of the castle gazing sorrowfully out before her, when the King appeared and asked the cause of her sadness.

"Dear lord!" she replied, 'rich indeed are we in lands and subjects, as also in fame and honor, yet one thing do we lack that oft cloth grieve me much. At my dear father's court many knights of great renown came and went, and there were

daily feastings and tourneys, the fame of which spread throughout all lands. But here, alas! we heap up vast stores of gold and jewels in our treasure chests, and forswear those pleasures which might well serve in time of need to provide us with blood and treasure.'

"Thou speakest truth, my wife,' said the King, 'and henceforth I will do even as other princes. To-morrow messengers shall summon hither all our friends from far and near, and we will prepare a great feast for them.'

"At this Queen Ute was rejoiced and cried joyfully: 'Then I will search my chests and bring forth rich garments with gold and jewels also, that we may fittingly reward the victors in the games.'

"Spring came and with it the time fixed for the festivities. The fields were gay with blossoms, and wood and grove were filled with the songs of birds. On every road were seen fluttering pennons as bands of knights in shining armor approached from all directions. The huge castle with its sixty towers was soon filled to overflowing, and sumptuous tents were erected without the walls, while the King and Queen took good care that their guests were well provided for in every way. Sounds of mirth and rejoicing filled the air, and many a lance was splintered in the lists. Thus nine days went joyously by, but on the tenth a terrible calamity befell the royal host.

"In the hall a wandering minstrel had just struck his harp and begun his heroic lay. King Sigeband and his Queen were seated on the throne, with knights and ladies grouped about them in a circle. The little prince was in the garden with his attendants who, attracted by the minstrel's song, had gathered about the door, forgetting the child; and he ran gayly hither and thither, rejoicing in his freedom. Suddenly there was a great crashing among the branches of the trees, and a griffin swooped down, seized the boy in its claws and bore him off with mighty strokes of its huge wings. His screams penetrated to the hall, and all rushed forth in alarm; but rescue was then impossible, for already the griffin had mounted to the

clouds and soon vanished in the distance with its prey. There was an end of all the festivities, and naught but lamentations and cries of woe were heard throughout the castle, where but now had echoed the sound of joyous laughter. The royal parents were wellnigh broken-hearted.

"The boy still lived, however, and gazed, terror-stricken, into the depths beneath him. Faster than the storm-wind flew the griffin and soon the sea was beneath them. Full a hundred miles from home had he been borne, when looking down Hagen perceived a dark chain of rugged mountains rising from an island. Here the griffin alighted on a rocky peak, flung the boy into its nest and flew away again. The young griffins stretched their necks eagerly for the prey, the flapping of their wings sounding like the breakers on the shore, but each tried to seize the prize for himself and began to fight, clawing fiercely at one another with harsh cries. One of the monsters, profiting by this opportunity, seized the boy and flew with him to the top of a tree, but as it alighted the branch broke beneath the creature's weight, and Hagen, slipping from its clutches, dropped safe to the ground and hastily concealed himself in a cleft of rock thickly overgrown with bushes.

"When the young hero had recovered somewhat from his fright he looked about him and, seeing no sign of the griffin, was creeping cautiously along through the bushes, when suddenly there stood before him three beautiful damsels. They too had been stolen in their childhood by the griffin; but how they had contrived to escape the monster is no part of my tale. When they saw the noble boy in his rich garments coming toward them they were terrified, and quickly disappeared in a rocky cave near by, thinking that a dwarf who dwelt in the heart of the mountains had come forth into the light of day. But no sooner did Hagen spy the maidens than he sprang eagerly after them.

"'Whence comest thou?' they cried. 'Get thee hence and do us no evil, for enough have we to bear already!'

"'Nay, dear maidens, send me not away, I pray,' replied Hagen, 'but give me something to eat, for I am wellnigh famished. A fierce griffin brought me hither. Only help me and I will tell you whence I came.'

"When they saw that it was really a human child before them, they were overjoyed and caressed the boy fondly, after which they brought him food and drink and made him welcome to their cave. There he abode with them many days and years, and grew strong and brave under their loving care.

"One day a band of pilgrims chanced to approach the island in their ships, and Hagen and the maidens gazed joyfully at them, for they thought the hour of their deliverance had come. But suddenly a great storm arose; lightning flashed from the inky clouds, and loud rolled the thunder. The ships were tossed hither and thither among the raging billows. One after another was dashed to pieces on the rocks in spite of all the efforts of the unfortunate pilgrims; and when the storm subsided, no soul was left alive of all the band. The next morning the shore was strewn with corpses, and the griffin bore many of them to its nest to feed its young.

"Hagen spied the body of a knight among them who had been dashed against a rock by the force of the waves. Watching his chance, the youth hurriedly seized the knight's mail and helm and sword and bow and quiver. Scarcely had he completed his task when he heard a whiffling among the rocks and saw the griffin approaching; but now he was well armed and had no thought of fear. With steady hand he launched an arrow at the creature, but it rebounded from the thick hide and fell harmless to the ground. Therewith the furious monster rushed upon him; but already the sword flashed above Hagen's head, and springing aside he shore off one of the huge wings. Then it, struck fiercely at him with its claw, but this too he severed at a blow, and soon his foe lay dead before him. A cry of joy issued from the cave; but scarcely was it uttered when a fresh terror seized the maidens, for now a whole swarm of griffins came swooping down from the rocks. But Hagen's

courage had grown with victory, and the sword gleamed like lightning in his hands. Fierce indeed was the struggle and many a hero would have succumbed, but the youth held his ground bravely and succeeded at last in slaying all the monsters.

"Then he cried: 'Come forth, dear maidens! Now for the first time you may enjoy the sun and air in freedom, without fear!'

"Joyously they ran to greet the gallant youth—nor could they sufficiently thank him for slaying the terrible griffins.

"A new life began for Hagen. From that hour he had no thought save for the use of his new-found weapons; nor was it long till he could bring down birds upon the wing with his arrows. Even fishes in the water could not escape his skill. He would spend whole days roaming about through the forest; learned to run swiftly as the flying stag, and, to the amazement and terror of the maidens, would leap streams and chasms with the strength and agility of the panther.

"Once a fierce dragon sprang at him from a dark cleft of rock; but Hagen clove its skull with his sharp sword, and it fell, writhing horribly in the death agony. When it was dead he tasted the blood of the creature, and immediately felt new strength come to him; whereupon he drank of it till he had gained the strength of twelve men. The skin he bore with him to the cave as a trophy of his victory.

"Not long after this he met a lion in the forest, but at the sound of his mighty hunting call the beast turned and fled. Hagen pursued and captured it alive and, after binding up its jaws and claws with ropes of fibre, bore his prize to the maidens on his shoulders. Before this they had been unable to make fires and were forced to eat raw meat, but now Hagen could strike sparks from the rocks, and this proved of great help to the maidens. The food they were now able to prepare

was more wholesome and palatable, and day by day their beauty grew to greater fulness.

"One day Hagen said: 'Let us follow the shore of the island; perchance elsewhere we may discover a ship that will take us to our homes.'

"They set out upon their quest without delay, the maidens clad in garments they had skilfully wrought from fibre, and after twenty-five days of wandering they descried a vessel. Hagen's voice was louder than the roaring of the waves, and his shouts were soon heard by those on the ship; but when they beheld the strangely clad damsels, they took them for water-nixies and dared not row a boat to land. Then Hagen called on them for help in God's name; whereupon the count who commanded the vessel entered a boat with twelve knights and came ashore. He was struck with the wondrous beauty of the maidens, but they were ashamed of their rude attire and hastily concealed themselves. Some of the knights rowed back to the ship and fetched some women's apparel, which the girls hastily donned in the shelter of a thicket, after which the count took them with Hagen on his vessel. The ship's folk greeted the maidens kindly when they found they were not tricky sprites but fair mortals; and after they had refreshed themselves with food and drink, the count asked what evil fate had brought them to the island.

"They were loath to make their misfortunes known to a stranger, yet could not well refuse the request. Accordingly, the eldest replied: 'My father wore the crown of farthest India, when the griffin snatched me from him. Alas! I shall nevermore behold my home!'

"I too am from a distant land,' said the second maiden. 'My noble father—plunged in deepest sorrow by my loss, I fear—was King of Portugal, and many princes did homage to him.'

"Lastly, the youngest spoke: 'My home is in Iceland, whence the griffin bore me hither. So dear am I unto my father

that well I know he gladly would bestow his crown on him who may restore me to him.'

""Twas by God's will that ye were carried to the island,' said the count, 'and surely He hath wrought your deliverance. Trust yourselves therefore to His care!'

"Then he turned to Hagen, saying: 'Thy companions have made known to me their rank and history; now would I gladly learn thine own, bold youth, and how thou camest to the island.'

"My fate was even as theirs, Sir Knight,' replied Hagen; 'like them I was borne hither by the griffin. As for my father, he is King of Ireland, Sigeband by name.'

"Then the count asked whether the monster yet lived. Hagen's eyes flashed and he grasped his sword firmly as he answered: 'Nay, I slew the creature and therewith all its young.'

"All eyes were fixed in amazement upon the young hero as he spoke these words, and some of the knights praised him, saying: 'Truly, thy deed is worthy all men's praise; indeed 'twere doubtful whether any of us would have succeeded in slaying the griffin.'

"But Hagen observed how they talked with one another apart and endeavored secretly to remove his weapons. This roused his anger, and he warned them against any misdeed; whereupon the count whispered to his followers: 'We must accomplish our ends by force!' Then approaching Hagen, he said harshly: 'Of a truth, thou hast fallen into my hands in good time. Much injury have I suffered from thy father's warriors—wherefore I will hold thee captive till such time as he shall have made me full amends.'

"Whatsoever evil may have befallen thee at the hands of Ireland's heroes, that surely is no fault of mine,' replied Hagen. 'Yet do thou but fetch me to my home and all shall be well, I promise thee.'

"'Better security is it for me to hold thee prisoner,' said the count. 'As for the maidens, I will bestow them upon my courtiers.'

"At these words Hagen flew into a passion. 'Now, by my faith,' he shouted, 'I will not be thy captive, nor shalt thou touch one hair upon the maidens' heads!' Then turning to the ship's people, he cried—'Richly will I reward you, good mariners, if ye will hearken to my bidding and bear me to my home. Heed well my words, for if ye do fail me, good cause shall ye have to rue it.'

"But the count sternly ordered them to seize Hagen, whereupon the youth snatched his sword from its sheath, and a furious fight began upon the ship. Heads rolled from the deck into the sea, and Hagen thrust the bodies after them with his foot. None could stand against him, and at last all those who were not slain fled to the farthest corner of the ship's hold. Then he rushed upon the count, who would surely have been slain had not the maidens besought Hagen to have mercy. At their prayers, the hero sheathed his sword and ordered the ship to be steered according to his will. None dared now to oppose him, and thus the homeward voyage to Ireland was begun. Nor did the ship's folk need word or deed from this time forth to urge them to industry, for they already feared his very glance.

"On the seventeenth day they came in sight of the castle where Hagen's parents dwelt; and the mariners were in great fear lest Sigeband should slay them; but when Hagen saw this he reassured them, saying: 'Fear not! My father will forgive all when he learns 'twas ye that did save me from the island. Some of you shall, bear a message to my parents to tell them I still do live, and surely no evil will befall those who bring such tidings.'

"Choosing twelve men, therefore, he said to them: 'Go ye to the court and ask the King if he would behold his son. He will not credit your words, perchance. Seek then my mother and ask her if she cloth bear in mind the golden cross her son

was used to wear upon his breast. She will surely follow you to the ship.'

"The men did as they were bidden; but when they entered the royal hall, the King at once recognized them by their garments as his foes and angrily demanded how they had dared come thither. Whereupon one of them replied: 'My Lord, thy son Hagen hath sent us. Soon shalt thou behold him, for he is close at hand.'

"'Thy words are false!' cried Sigeband, 'for who that knoweth how my dear son was torn from me may believe he still doth live? 'Tis many years now I have mourned his death.'

"Then turning to the Queen, the messengers asked her whether she would still know the cross she had given to her son; whereat a great flood of joy swept over her, and she cried eagerly, 'Let us hasten to the shore that I may see the cross!'

"The King ordered horses to be brought at once, and rode forth with the Queen from the gates of the castle, followed by a stately train. Hagen meanwhile had come on shore with the knights and the maidens, and when he beheld his beloved parents once again his heart swelled with joy, while tears overflowed his eyes. Crowds of people had gathered to gaze upon him, for he had grown to be a mighty hero. The King made him welcome, saying: 'If thou art he whom thou declarest thyself to be, then shall my declining years be made glad indeed!'

"As his mother approached, the youth drew the golden cross from his breast and held it out to her, whereupon with a cry of joy she clasped him to her heart and wept aloud for happiness, while his father, too, embraced him, with streaming eyes.

"Hagen now interceded for the count, and Sigeband, who could refuse nothing to his new-found son, clasped hands with his enemy in token of peace, and promised to make amends for any wrongs the count might have received at his hands.

"Joyously they all took their way back to the castle. The Queen welcomed the maidens as if they had been her own daughters, and clothed them in the costliest apparel. Hagen soon after chose the maiden from India, Hilda by name, as his wife. On the death of his parents he mounted the throne and became one of the mightiest princes that ever reigned. His wife presented him with a daughter, also called Hilda, who afterwards became Queen of our land and whose wrongs we are now going forth to avenge. God grant her child Gudrun be yet alive!"

Night had fallen as the old knight closed his tale. The full moon rode high in the heavens and the pale stars looked down kindly upon the band of warriors.

CHAPTER XIV

THE WELCOME MESSAGE

One day Gudrun stood with Hildburg on the shore watching the sun sink like a fiery ball into the shining sea, when suddenly something rose above the crimson surface of the water that looked like a white swan. But when it came nearer, Gudrun saw that it was a beautiful mermaid; and as both the damsels gazed in wonder at this apparition, it spoke to them and said: "If ye seek for comfort, then ask of me what ye would know!"

So Gudrun asked first of all if her mother yet lived and if all was well with her.



GUDRUN ON THE STRAND.

The mermaid answered: "Gladly will I tell thee what 'twill rejoice thy heart to hear. Queen Hilda lives and ever

hopes to see thy safe return. To that end hath she made ready such a mighty fleet as seldom hath sailed the waves."

Again Gudrun asked: "How fares it with my brother Ortwin? and tell me, O gentle spirit, is Herwig, my betrothed, alive?"

In silvery tones the mermaid replied: "Well are they both, and now upon the sea. Soon shalt thou have proof that thou art not forgotten."

Then Gudrun's face shone, and tears of joy glistened in her eyes. "Truly," she said, "these are joyous tidings thou dost bring me. Yet tell me further if thou canst—do Irolt and Morung come hither also?"

"Soon shall many a Norman helm be shattered by their swords!" answered the maiden, and so saying she disappeared beneath the crimson flood.

Then the maidens lamented that they could question her no further, and Gudrun said: "Come forth to us once more, sweet messenger!" whereat the water parted and again the mermaid arose.

"Ask what thou wouldst know!" she said, and Gudrun continued eagerly: "Hartmut and Ludwig are well armed and have many a valiant knight to aid them, wherefore I would know if Horant too is with my kin. 'Twould grieve me much did we lack his sword in battle!"

"He is among the heroes on the fleet," the mermaid answered; "when they shall engage in battle to deliver thee and avenge the death of the King and his followers, 'tis Horant that will bear thy mother's banner in the fight."

Once more Gudrun asked: "And Frute and Wate—are they too with our knights?"

"In truth," replied the mermaid, "thou hast no truer friends than those same heroes. Frute is on that ship whose helm Count Wate's mighty arm directs."

Again she was about to vanish, but Gudrun cried beseechingly: "Tell me, I pray thee, when shall the first messenger from my mother appear to me?"

And the mermaid answered as she slowly sank beneath the waves: "To-morrow morn two messengers will come to thee—warriors are they both, on whom thou mayst rely."

Gudrun and Hildburg were now so full of joy and hope that they only half completed their allotted tasks, and they talked of nothing but the beloved friends they were so soon to see. On their return in the evening they were received by the wicked Gerlinda with bitter abuse because they had accomplished so little work.

Hildburg pleaded: "Be patient with us, madam, for indeed we work as much as we are able. Were it not for the biting winds that blow upon the shore we could do better."

But the Queen replied harshly: "What care I for the cold winds! See to it ye are at your work betimes upon the morrow, for there is much to be made ready for the feast, and if all be not finished by nightfall, in truth ye shall suffer for it more dearly than ever did servants of a King!"

After their scanty meal of bread and water, they sought the chamber where two hard benches without pillows of any sort served them as beds; but little sleep was there for them, so eagerly they watched for the first glimmer of dawn. At last a faint ray of light penetrated the chamber, and Hildburg arose and looked out of the window.

"Alas!" she cried, "what shall we do? Snow has fallen in the night. If we are forced to wash to-day in those piercing winds, by sunset they will surely find us dead upon the shore!"

Gudrun, too, shuddered at the thought, but she reminded Hildburg it was there they were to see the messengers, and this gave them courage. Also she said to her: "Go thou to the Queen and beseech her to give us shoes to

wear to-day. If I ask it she will certainly refuse, so great is her hatred for me."

So Hildburg sought the Queen, who still lay in her luxurious bed, but the maiden dared not awaken her and returned sadly to her companion. Gerlinda soon appeared, however, and berated them roughly for not being already at their work.

"Snow has fallen, O Queen," said Hildburg; "give us shoes to wear, we pray thee, else shall we surely freeze!"

But Gerlinda only laughed, and cried scornfully: "Let your pride keep you warm, forsooth! No shoes shall you have from me. And beware if your work be not finished by nightfall! What would your deaths matter to me, fool?"

Weeping bitterly, Gudrun exclaimed: "It may be God's will that I shall one day remind thee of this!" And in their bare feet the poor maidens made their way through the March snows to the seashore and began their painful task.

CHAPTER XV

THE TWO KNIGHTS

Beyond the royal castle the coast was thickly wooded for a long distance, and there the fleet from Hegelingen had lain concealed for two days, having reached Normandy at last after their long and tedious voyage. The horses were led ashore to stretch their stiffened limbs, and all was made ready for the approaching struggle. Wate charged his men to see that the fastenings of helm and hauberk were well secured, adding: "If there be any whose shirt of mail too loosely sits upon him, he may choose another, for Queen Hilda has provided five hundred fresh suits of armor and each good knight may claim one as his due."

The heroes then held a council and Ortwin said: "Frute hath seen seven castles from the tree on yonder hill; but which of them is Ludwig's and Hartmut's stronghold? We first assail that, and before the battle we must also learn where Gudrun and the other maidens abide."

"Spies must be sent out," declared Frute. Whereupon Ortwin announced that he would be a spy and go in quest of what they wished to learn. All protested against this plan, but the young hero said firmly, "Mine is the task of right, since Gudrun is my sister."

"'Tis true she is thy sister, brother Ortwin," said Herwig, but also is she my betrothed. Therefore I will go with thee."

This did not please Wate, and finding they were not to be moved from their purpose, he grew very wroth. "This is but childish folly!" he cried, "and never will I agree to it. 'Twould be bad enough were one of our knights to be seized by Hartmut's people, but how would it fare with you, did such befall?"

"We must shrink from no danger when Gudrun's rescue is at stake," replied Herwig; "nor would any in all the army be so zealous in her cause as we ourselves. Wherefore gainsay us not, good Wate, for thou canst not alter our determination."

Then, summoning the foremost of their comrades, they charged them to fulfil faithfully the oaths they had sworn. Mark well my words, bold warriors!" said Ortwin; "should we be captured and held for ransom, sell all your lands and goods, if need be, to secure our freedom. But if they slay us, then avenge our death as befitteth true comrades; and above all, I charge you, spare no effort to deliver Gudrun and those other unhappy maidens."

To this they all pledged themselves and gave the princes their hands upon the promise, vowing never to rest till Gudrun was restored to her home. Then Ortwin and Herwig took leave of their comrades, stepped into a boat and pushed off, followed by many an anxious glance. Keeping close to the shore, they had rowed almost to the nearest castle when, rounding a wooded point, they beheld two maidens on the strand. At the sight of the approaching knights Gudrun was seized with mingled joy and fear.

"These must be the warriors of whom we were told!" she said. "Yet how can I endure the shame of it, should any messenger from my friends find me in this wretched plight? Tell me, I pray thee, dear Hildburg, what I shall do,—remain here at my shameful task, or seek refuge in flight?"

"Surely thou knowest best what is befitting," replied Hildburg. "Choose therefore quickly, and "I will do as thou sayst." And with that, Gudrun turned and fled.

When the heroes saw the maidens disappearing they hastily leaped ashore, for they had hoped to gain some information from them. "Why do ye flee from us, fair maids?" they cried; "surely we mean you no harm. Come back! or ye shall lose all the costly garments that lie here upon the shore!"

But the maidens paid no heed. Then Herwig shouted: "I charge you in the name of woman's honor to reply to us!"

At this the tears started to Gudrun's eyes. "Alas!" she cried, "have we ever forgotten aught that is due to woman's honor? No longer will I seek to flee!" and therewith she returned to the shore followed by Hildburg. The knights gazed at them in astonishment; for in spite of their long and arduous labors they still retained their proud and lofty bearing, though so scantily clad that they shivered in the chill March snow falling about them.

"Fear not," said Ortwin. "May God chastise any that would deal evilly by you! But methinks ye are more fit to wear crowns than thus to toil beside the shore. Hath your master other washer-maidens so fair as ye?"

"In yonder castle are many maidens more beautiful than we," replied Gudrun. "Yet, I pray thee, sir, permit us to return to our task, for should our mistress see us idle it would fare ill with us."

Then Ortwin offered them four golden rings, saying: "Nay, be not angry at our words, but take these rings. They shall be yours if ye will but answer truthfully the questions we would ask."

Gudrun shook her head. "We may take no gifts from ye, fair sirs," she answered, "yet put your questions quickly, for we must not stay. If it were known at the castle that we had talked with you, we should pay dearly for it."

"First tell us, then," said Herwig, "to whom may all these rich lands and castles belong?"

"King Ludwig is lord of this land, and in yonder castle holds his court," replied Gudrun.

Herwig asked if Hartmut was then at home, and Gudrun answered: "He is even now within the castle, and with him full four thousand of his knights."

The maidens would fain have departed, yet they were loath to leave the strangers, whose speech reminded them so much of home.

"We would learn further," said Ortwin, "wherefore Hartmut hath so many knights assembled at the castle. Is he perchance at feud with some neighboring country and seeking to guard himself against attack?"

"Of that I know naught," replied Gudrun; but after a pause she added: "Yet there is one, a far distant land whose power Hartmut well might fear. It is called Hegelingen." As the name of the fatherland passed her lips tears streamed down the maiden's cheeks and she turned away to hide them.

When the heroes saw how the damsels shook with cold they hastily offered their cloaks, but Gudrun refused them, saying: "May God reward your kindness, gentle sirs, but none shall ever see me in man's attire."

Thereupon Herwig looked more closely at her, and a sigh escaped him as he seemed to see a likeness to the fair betrothed whom he supposed to have been forced to become Hartmut's wife, little thinking that she now stood before him.

Again Ortwin questioned her: "Were not some noble damsels once brought hither from a distant land? One of them was called Gudrun."

"Alas, 'tis true!" she answered. "Well do I know her whom thou namest. She came as Hartmut's captive, and much hath the poor maid been forced to bear."

At this the heroes cried with one voice: "Tell us quickly, damsel, where we may find her!"

"If indeed it be she ye seek, then never shall ye find her more on earth," said Gudrun. "Of grief and suffering is she dead and lieth deep beneath the flowery sod."

Herwig covered his eyes with his hand, while Ortwin turned away and leaned upon his sword, shaking his head sorrowfully.

Then Gudrun cried: "Why are ye so moved by this news, sir knights? Your breasts heave as they would burst your mail asunder! 'Twould almost seem that ye were kin to that poor maid."

Herwig could no longer contain his grief, but wrung his hands and cried aloud: "Alas, noble damsels, she was more than life to me! My bride, betrothed to me by solemn vows when Hartmut treacherously did steal her from her home!"

"Thy words are false!" cried Gudrun. "Thou art not Herwig! He would long since have sought to deliver her; or were she no more, then at the least her unhappy women, one of whom am I!"

"Nay, by my faith, 'tis truth I speak!" said Herwig. "If thou indeed art one of Gudrun's maidens, then wilt thou know this ring upon my finger, for 'twas a gift from her, who once did wear it."

Then Gudrun's eyes shone like stars and her cheeks flushed. "Well do I know both gold and jewel," she said, "for it was I that wore the ring!" And raising her own hand, she added: "Perchance thou knowst this also; 'twas Herwig placed it on my finger!"

Now at last brother and sister, bridegroom and bride, knew one another and wept together in mingled joy and sorrow. Still supposing her to be Hartmut's wife, Ortwin at length asked Gudrun how she, a Queen, chanced to be in such wretched plight and forced to perform such menial tasks.

Weeping she answered: "How couldst thou think, my brother, that I would wed King Hartmut? Ever have I remained true to my plighted troth and therefore am I forced to bear much evil."

"Well indeed have we succeeded in our task!" cried Herwig. "Come let us hasten to the boat and thy maiden with thee. Our fleet is close at hand and we will guide thee thither. Now of a truth are all thy sorrows ended!"

"This may not be," replied Ortwin, "dear as my sister is to me. Aye, had I an hundred sisters like to Gudrun I would lose them every one, rather than steal them thus away like any thief!"

"Yet bethink thee how Gudrun's danger will increase when our presence here is known," remonstrated Herwig. "Perchance we shall never find her then!"

"Have no fear, Herwig!" answered Ortwin. "Though my sister be buried in their deepest dungeon—thou still shalt see her on the morrow. Yet even should it be otherwise, I would be hacked to pieces with her on this spot ere she should with my consent be taken away in secret!"

Gudrun said reproachfully: "What evil have I done to thee, my brother, that thou wouldst leave me longer in servitude? Didst thou know what I am forced to bear, thou wouldst take me hence this very hour!"

"Think not, dear sister," replied Ortwin, "that I fail in love for thee. But to do thus, believe me, were no knightly deed."

Reluctantly Herwig agreed with Ortwin in this and they accordingly took leave of the maidens and returned to their boat. Gudrun wept bitterly crying: "Alas! are my troubles never to cease For years have I waited and longed for this, only to be once more forsaken when I scarce have looked upon your faces?"

"'Tis but for a brief space that we leave the dearest maid," cried Herwig from the boat, "that we may bear thee homeward in all honor. To-morrow morn at sunrise we shall be before the castle with a host. Be of good cheer and let no one know that thou hast seen us. God will be of aid!"

So saying, they seized their oars, and soon the boat was lost to sight behind the bend in the shore.

CHAPTER XVI

DANGER AND STRATAGEM

Now it chanced that Heregart, the damsel who was wedded to Hartmut's cup-bearer, had spied the two knights with Gudrun and Hildburg on the shore, and supposing them to be fishermen, she told the Queen how Gudrun had kissed and embraced them. Hastening to the window, Gerlinda saw the maidens standing idle and seeming by their motions to be talking eagerly together. So indeed they were, for they could think of nothing but their happiness and the good fortune that was in store for them the next day.

"Two great and noble Kings have this day held me in their arms," said Gudrun, "and no longer will I degrade myself with these shameful tasks Gerlinda hath imposed on me."

But Hildburg replied: "Methinks 'twere better we did finish what was given us, for that wicked wretch will make us suffer yet more cruelly if she find it left undone."

"Nay, let come what will," cried Gudrun, proudly, "for me, I care not!" and therewith she flung all the garments into the sea. For a time they floated on the surface, then sank, and were seen no more. By this time it was growing dark, and the maidens took their way back to the castle, where the Queen met them with angry abuse.

"Wherefore tarriest thou so late?" she cried to Gudrun. "The love of mighty Kings thou dost despise forsooth, yet thou stoopest to bandy words, aye, and kisses, too, with low knaves upon the shore. Deny it not, for Heregart with her own eyes hath seen it! Methinks thy boasted pride should keep thee from such deeds as this!"

Gudrun raised her head, and her cheeks flamed, as she retorted: "'Tis shameful falsehood thou dost speak! Never have

I held speech with any man in all this land save he were of my friends or kindred!"

"Ha!" cried Gerlinda, choking with rage, "thou darest to give me the lie! Dearly shalt thou atone for this, thou spiteful jade!"

"Take heed how thou dost do me further wrong!" said Gudrun. "Of nobler blood am I than thou; and thy whole house and thou may one day have to reckon for your sins!"

Suddenly Gerlinda discovered the empty baskets and asked where the garments were. "At the bottom of the sea!" replied Gudrun, "where they may remain, for aught of me!"

"Now shall it fare ill with you for this!" shrieked the Queen, and trembling with passion she ordered thorns to be brought with which to scourge Gudrun's back, and bade two of her retainers bind the maiden to a post with hempen cords. At this a great weeping and wailing arose among the women; but Gudrun in her extremity resorted to an artifice.

"Gerlinda," she said, "thou hast been greatly deceived. Yet bethink thee—how can it be that I should ever wear the crown of Normandy, if I have once been bound and scourged by knaves here in thy land?"

In speechless astonishment the Queen gazed at Gudrun as if she had not heard her words aright. But the maiden continued: "It is even as I say. If it be still his wish I will consent to wed thy son and be Queen of Normandy."

Forthwith some knights who heard these words hastened to Hartmut with the news, hoping for a reward. That hero was seated in his chamber with his comrades, listening to the tale of some aged warrior's heroic deeds, when the door flew open and a knight burst in exclaiming: "Good news, good news, most noble King! The lady Gudrun's heart hath softened, and she consents to be thy wife!"

"Nay, surely thou art mad!" said Hartmut. "How can it be, when all these years she hath remained deaf to my

entreaties? Yet, by my faith, an thy words prove true thou shalt have three castles with all the lands thereto, aye, and sixty rings of gold moreover, for thy news. Ah, then indeed would my life be blest!"

Therewith came a second knight and said: "The Queen desires thy presence, my lord, for Gudrun agrees to accept thee as her husband."

Then Hartmut sprang up joyfully and hastened to Gudrun, whom he found still in her dripping garments. The tears started to her eyes at sight of him, for although necessity had forced her to this stratagem, it grieved her sorely that she must deceive him. He was about to clasp her to his heart, but she stepped back, saying: "Nay, my lord Hartmut, that may not be as yet. Ill would it become a mighty King to stoop to a lowly serving maid as I am now; but when I stand before thee crowned and clad in royal robes, then mayst thou embrace me before all thy knights."

"Most noble maiden," replied Hartmut, "since thou art now to be my wife, gladly will I do thy will in all things."

"If this be true and I may here indeed command," said Gudrun, "then do I desire a bath to be prepared at once, and let my damsels be restored to me."

"Thy wishes shall be obeyed forthwith," replied Hartmut, and he ordered the maidens to be summoned thither from their labors. Soon they appeared, clad in soiled and ragged garments, their hair hanging in disorder about their faces.

"Behold, O King, the plight of these poor maids!" said Gudrun, pointing to them. "Me-thinks 'tis little to thy honor they should meet with such mistreatment."

"All shall be changed now, I promise thee, fair maid," replied the King.

"See then that those who have been made to suffer for me be provided with such apparel as befits their rank, for all are of noble birth," demanded Gudrun.

After Hartmut had issued these commands he left the hall; and the tirewomen, hoping thereby to win Gudrun's favor, performed their tasks with such zeal and despatch that soon the maidens blossomed out fair and beautiful once more in their costly attire. But before Gudrun they all paled as do the stars before the sun.

Then Hartmut had rich viands laid before them, with wine and mead; and sending for his sister Ortrun, he made known to her that what they so long had prayed for at last had come to pass. Ortrun hastened at once to Gudrun and the two maidens wept in each other's arms. Once more they sat joyfully side by side, yet each had a different cause for happiness; Ortrun rejoicing that she was to have Gudrun as a sister, while Gudrun's thoughts were of her friends and the deliverance that was to come to her through them.

"Already had it been agreed," said Ortrun, "that I should wear the crown of the kingdom; for since thou didst scorn Hartmut, he would always have remained unwedded. But to thee, dear Gudrun, I gladly yield both crown and royal honors."

Her loving words brought tears to Gudrun's eyes, and she replied softly: "Never hast thou shown me aught but kindness. May God reward thee for it! Nor will I forget how oft my sufferings have caused thee grief."

Then turning to Hartmut, she said: "Do thou send messengers to all thy friends and summon them to court without delay. Not till these have shown themselves loyal to me may I wear the crown of thy kingdom in peace and safety."

So Hartmut went forthwith and chose an hundred knights to ride forth with messages that very night—much to Gudrun's secret joy, for she knew these warriors would be far from the battlefield by the next morning.

Then she begged to be left alone with her damsels after their long separation; and Gerlinda and Hartmut yielded willingly to her desire. Ortrun, too, kissed, her friend and departed, while Hartmut sent cup-bearers and servers, who once more loaded the tables with food and drink.

One of the maidens cried woefully: "My heart is like to break, for now we shall see home no more, but ever abide here with those who brought us hither to our sorrow." And she began to weep as did all the rest.

Gudrun dared not speak now of the news which had brought her such comfort, but her joy was so great that she laughed aloud. Word of this was brought to Gerlinda, who told Ludwig of it and then sought Hartmut.

"My son," she said, "believe me, some dire evil threatens us! Gudrun, whose lips have never smiled in all these years, hath just laughed aloud so that the sound of it was heard in the hall without. Some secret message must have reached her with good news. Be on thy guard, I say, and see that thy comrades are well armed!

But Hartmut was too full of joy to harbor any thought of ill.

"Begrudge not her happiness to the maid!" was his reply. "Her friends are much too far away ever to come hither to seek her!"

After their repast, Gudrun asked the servitors if beds had been prepared for her and her women whereupon, taking lights, they led them to a hall in which stood thirty beds, with pillows of gayly colored Arabian stuffs, and decked with coverlets of silk cunningly interwoven with threads of gold which gleamed like fire. Gudrun dismissed them saying: "We would fain seek rest such as has long been denied us; wherefore depart and leave us to ourselves."

When they were alone, the doors were made fast and all seated themselves to partake of the rare wines that had been

placed upon the table. Then Gudrun said in a low voice: "At last, dear maidens, I may make known what cause we have for rejoicing. All have remained true to me and to the fatherland save one, Heregart, who will sorely rue her infidelity, I fear. This very day my brother Ortwin, and Herwig, my betrothed, came to me bringing good tidings. To-morrow you yourselves shall see them before the castle with all their host. Hearken now and mark my words! She who with morning's light shall first discover the banners of our friends and tell me of it will have rich reward."

Now the joy of the maidens knew no bounds; but Gudrun, fearing there were listeners without the door, bade them repress all expression thereof that might betray them.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MORNING

When Ortwin and Herwig returned from their quest, the other heroes hastened joyfully to meet them and asked what news they brought. "Quickly summon all our comrades and then ye shall learn all," replied Ortwin. When the warriors had gathered about him in a circle he began: Fain would I leave unsaid that which I have to tell, good comrades. I have seen my sister Gudrun and her companion Hildburg."

Here one of the knights interrupted him, saying: "Make no mock of us, Sir Prince! How could that have been? Gudrun, if indeed she yet doth live, would surely be kept safe within the castle."

"Ill would it become me to make sport of gallant knights," replied Ortwin. "If you doubt my words, ask Herwig then, for he did also see her; yet, alas! 'twas in such a plight that deeply must we sorrow for her fate. We found her with Hildburg, who doth share her lot, as a washer-maiden on the shore!"

At this the heroes shed tears of grief and rage, but old Wate shouted: "Now, by the mass, this is no time for tears. Rather let us go forthwith and dye those garments crimson that Gudrun hath washed white for Hartmut and his knights!"

A council was now held to determine the best plan for attacking the castle both by land and sea.

Let me but have them once within my reach," said Wate, "and I will thank them well for what they have done to Gudrun! Hearken now to my counsel. One part of our forces must approach the castle walls by land before the dawn; this I myself will lead. The moon shines bright, and ere 'tis day we shall have the castle surrounded on every side, while in the

early morning ye shall bring the rest of our warriors with the fleet to aid us from the sea."

This plan was at once agreed upon and all busied themselves with preparations for departure. Long before daybreak Wate with his force had completely surrounded the castle on the landward side. A wood concealed the horsemen, who stretched themselves out with their heads upon their shields to enjoy a brief repose. Wate had enjoined them, however, to be early astir, and linger not after the first sign of dawn. At the first sound of his hunting horn all were to seize their arms, at the second seek their steeds, and at the third they were to swing themselves into their saddles and follow the banner of the Queen, which was to be borne before them.

Herwig, Ortwin, and the other heroes meanwhile had embarked with their followers and were waiting for the dawn. Quickly the night hours passed, and the morning sun rose in splendor from the sea.

From helm and harness, spear and shield
Shot forth in dazzling ray—
A sea of fire which seemed to spring
From wood and plain and bay,
And rolling in swift circling course
About the castle lay.

Gay banners in the morning glow,
Soon waved on every height;
In majesty, like giant swans,
Upon the waters bright,
Glided the ships with sails outspread
In truth a noble sight.

One of the damsels approached Gudrun's bed, and cried, "Awaken, lady, for our knights are near!" Quickly she sprang up and hastened to the window; but when she saw the banners fluttering in the morning breeze and looked down on the thousands who were joyously pressing on to battle, she

burst into tears at the thought of how many gallant heroes must fall in death that day.

Suddenly the tower warden raised his mighty voice. "Up—up! bold knights," he shouted, "up and to arms! Already have the Norman heroes slept too long!"

Gerlinda heard his cry and, springing from her bed, mounted to the battlements of the castle and gazed down tremblingly on the host. Then she hurried down to arouse King Ludwig who as yet had heard nothing of the alarm.

"Awake! awake! O King," she cried in shrill tones. "Our castle is surrounded by a mighty army, and dearly shall we have to pay this day for Gudrun's laughter!"

Ludwig bade her be silent, declaring he must see this army with his own eyes. "Yet, come what will," he said, "I am ready to meet it!" Then going to the window and looking down at the advancing host, he added: "Perchance they are but pilgrims coming hither bent on sale and barter. Call our son Hartmut, he will know."

Hartmut was already awake. He allowed his men to sleep on, however, and mounted to the battlements with Ludwig. Meanwhile the sun had lit the depths below, and when Hartmut beheld the serried ranks, he said: "These are no pilgrims, surely; they press upon us far too closely."

"Look at the banners, my son," said Ludwig, "mine eyes cannot distinguish the devices."

After a moment, Hartmut spoke: "I see one yonder that hath the look of an enemy's; aye, 'tis the banner of Karade—on a brown field waves a head of ruddy gold. These are no welcome guests, for ere that standard sinks full many a stalwart hero will have suffered death. Siegfried, who leads them, once did also woo Gudrun. The white one with the golden bars that flies beside it Wate hath unfurled. Queen Hilda gave it to him. The aged hero to the right is Frute, brother-in-arms to Wate. Yonder is Horant, who doth sing

such beauteous lays. Now shall he chant for us a slumber song when we have slain the foe and would gain rest from warfare. That one with the red bars and silver sword-points is borne by Ortwin, whose father thou didst slay upon the Wulpensand; and seest thou yon banneret of sky blue silk whereon green seaweeds are emblazoned? That is the device of Herwig, King of Zealand. He thinks to win back his bride, poor fool! 'Tis not his love but death he shall embrace ere-long, forsooth! Many are there yet that I do see, but now they make ready to attack the castle. Let us also arm for the fray."

So saying Hartmut descended to the hall where his knights still slept, and shouted: "Awake, ye heroes! for the foe is at our gates! Up and arm yourselves. We surely would not show them such discourtesy as to make them wait for us before the walls!"

Quickly the news spread through the castle, and arms were donned with joyous speed. No sooner did Gerlinda learn that her son was preparing to go out and meet the foe than she hastened to him and cried reprovingly: "Surely thou wilt not open the gates and put thyself in peril without reason? Have we not food for a year within the castle, so that we may endure a siege? Let the enemy dash their heads to pieces against the walls, if they will!"

Hartmut was displeased at this, and said: "It is not meet, my mother, for thee to counsel warriors in such matters. Go teach thy women to embroider silk with gold and precious stones, which more befitteth thee. Or send Gudrun to the shore again to wash thy garments. Thou seest now she still hath friends to avenge her wrongs!"

But Gerlinda only redoubled her entreaties. "Nay—if thou wilt but be guided by my words, my son, then shall the foe be brought to naught before the castle and never win back her we hold captive here."

Seeing that Hartmut remained unmoved, she turned to his knights and cried: "Throw not away your lives so foolishly,

but stay within and fling down stones and beams upon the enemy, or slay them with bolts from your arblasts."

Hartmut sprang up angrily: "Peace, I say! nor longer seek to counsel those who know better than thou what were best to do. Shame enough was it to me that I once did flee before them on the Wulpensand, and this stain will I to-day wipe out that my honor may once more shine as bright as gold. Aye, on the field of battle will I meet them, come what may, for rather would I there be slain than live pent up within these walls."

Gerlinda dared not gainsay him further, but turned weeping to the knights: "I beseech you, sirs, to guard my gallant son with all your power. If you but equal him in valor then surely will a splendid victory be ours!"

Now thou hast spoken well, my mother," said Hartmut, "and all who loyally stand by me to-day against the foe, shall share, I promise on my honor, in the spoils."

CHAPTER XVIII

HARTMUT FIGHTS WITH ORTWIN AND HORANT

Soon the gates of the huge castle were thrown open, and Hartmut rode forth followed by three thousand of his knights, leaving the rest to guard the gates and walls of the castle. Proudly waved their banners, and helm and armor glittered in the morning sun. Wate's hunting-horn sounded for the third time, so mighty a blast that it almost seemed to shake the walls and cause great forest trees to tremble. The old hero bade Horant lead the van and bear Queen Hilda's banner, while he rode hither and thither disposing his men in battle array. At a turret window Gudrun stood, waving a white kerchief.

As the Norman knights appeared, Ortwin asked: "Who may yon hero be who leads the band? His armor gleams like lightning in the sun, and nobly doth he bear him. Methinks an emperor would scarcely ride more proudly."

"That, my lord, is Hartmut," replied one of the knights; "he who did steal away thy sister."

"Ha! is it so?" cried Ortwin; "now had the wicked Gerlinda best aid him to find his way back in safety to the castle!" And he lowered his spear and plunged the spurs into the flanks of his snow-white charger so that it bounded high in the air.

But Hartmut had now discovered Ortwin also, and made ready to attack him. On they rushed, and came together with such force that both horses were overthrown. Out flashed the long swords from their golden sheaths and played like lightning about the helms of the two heroes. It was indeed a mighty combat. But ere-long they were forced apart by the rush of warriors eager for the fray, and the conflict became general. On all sides arose the din of battle. Siegfried was attacked by a band of Hartmut's knights, but he laid about him

so stoutly that his assailants soon succumbed to the fury of his blows.

Herwig, who was fighting for his bride, dashed joyously into the battle with colors flying, and Gudrun soon recognized him by his noble form and shining armor. Ludwig led his followers against the Danes who fought under Hilda's banner. Notwithstanding his years, the old King still had the strength of a bear, and many a stout helm was shattered by his sword-strokes as he cut his way deep into the ranks of the enemy. But Frute with his Holsteins and Frisians rode against him and slew many of his followers, while Morung and Irold strewed the earth with dead. Once more the tide of battle brought Ortwin and Hartmut face to face, and again shield and helm reechoed with their sounding blows. Each was determined his foe should not this time escape him, and at last, though Ortwin fought bravely, Hartmut succeeded in piercing his helm with a sword-stroke. When the Danes saw their young chief's armor streaked with blood they pressed on furiously, but many a good knight was slain ere they reached the princes and snatched Ortwin from death.

Horant dashed up to learn who had smitten his dear lord so sorely. Ortwin told him, and Hartmut, who was not far distant, laughed scornfully; whereat Horant, giving Hilda's banner into the hands of a knight, rushed fiercely upon the Norman King. But many men stood between, and Horant's sword dealt such slaughter among them that Hartmut cried: "Yon knight hath wrought enough of evil to us; soon shall he strike his last blow!" and forcing his way to Horant, he attacked him so fiercely that he was borne to the ground and would surely have been slain had not his comrades hastened to his rescue and carried him from out the press. Such was Hartmut's strength and valor that many began to doubt whether they should succeed in taking the castle.

But as soon as the wounds of Ortwin and Horant had been bound up, those heroes returned to the battle with unabated courage, while Wate, meanwhile, had wrought

terrible havoc among the Normans. Yet fast as they fell, others pressed on to avenge the death of their brethren, and ever hotter and fiercer waged the conflict.

CHAPTER XIX

LUDWIG FIGHTS WITH HERWIG

In the tumult, Herwig encountered Ludwig; and when he beheld the old King, whose blade dripped with the blood of heroes, he asked: "Who is the aged warrior that so fiercely wields his reeking sword?"

Ludwig heard the words and shouted in reply: "My name is Ludwig, and of this land I am the King. Doth any seek combat with me, let him step forth!"

"If thou be he," answered Herwig, "then well hast thou earned my hatred. Upon the Wulpensand thou didst slay King Hetel and many a comrade dear. Also didst thou rob me of my fair betrothed. Wherefore now over thy body will I win her back to me again."

"Boy, 'twere little need for thee to avow thyself," said Ludwig, scornfully. "But dearly shalt thou atone for that threat of thine!"

Therewith the two Kings rushed at each other amid the shouts of their followers. Herwig in his fury was like the raging sea; Ludwig, a great gray rock against which the foaming billows dash in vain. The struggle had lasted for some moments when Ludwig's sword descended with such force on the head of his adversary that Herwig tottered and sank upon his knee. Again the mighty blade fell and he would have been slain had not one of his knights sprung forward and received the blow upon his own body. The hero paid for his devotion with his life, but Herwig was borne away by his friends and soon revived. Looking up at the turret, he cried: "Shame were it to my knighthood that Gudrun should see me sink upon my knee before yon hoary chief! Now will I hasten after him to redeem my honor." And away he dashed, his men following with flying banners.

Hearing these shouts, Ludwig turned about, and great was his amazement to behold the young hero whom he had supposed slain. Once more they fought till their shields grew hot from the shower of blows, but now as Ludwig flung his sword aloft to deal the death-stroke to his royal foe, Herwig thrust his own blade deep into the old King's breast. Down he fell, and again Herwig smote; whereupon the head of the fierce Norman monarch rolled in the sand, staining it crimson.

This was the death signal for Ludwig's band. Like a hurricane tearing its way through the forest, on swept Herwig's knights against the foe, and few indeed were those who survived that terrible onslaught.

CHAPTER XX

HARTMUT FIGHTS WITH WATE

When the warden on the tower made known the fall of King Ludwig, loud shrieks and cries of woe arose within the castle. These Hartmut heard, and asking their cause, was told his father had been slain. Then looking about him and seeing how they were beset on all sides, he said to his followers: "Honor enough have we won to-day. Let us withdraw into the castle and await a more favorable opportunity for a fresh attack."

His knights followed him gladly, for they were weary with much strife; but when they sought to turn back they found the way was barred. Wate with his men was already fighting before the great gates. Beams and stones were being flung upon them from the walls, and bolts fell thick as hail-stones from the clouds, but Wate heeded them not; his thoughts were bent only upon victory. Between him and the Normans the dead lay piled by hundreds, and Hartmut said:

"By my faith, 'tis a mighty foe we have to deal with, and well are they wreaking vengeance for their ancient wrongs. If we would reach the gates once more, we must encounter heavy odds, for look! the enemy is there before us on every hand. Yonder wave Siegfried's colors, yet our warriors press him hard. At the other gate, 'tis plain by the sword-points on his banner that Ortwin fights, and many shall fall ere he sheathes his sword. On that side is Herwig with his followers. None can deny 'tis in true knightly fashion he doth battle for his bride. In truth, we have tarried too long on the field, and I know not which way to turn. Long will they wait for us within the castle, much I fear, for neither by craft nor yet by secret passage may we pass its walls. Naught remains to us save to dismount and cleave a way for ourselves with our swords."

Accordingly they all sprang from their horses, which they turned loose, and therewith began their perilous attempt.

Hartmut sought out Wate, thinking if he could but slay that mighty champion they might succeed in gaining entrance to the castle. No sooner did Wate see Hartmut approaching than he sprang to meet him. High in the air rose the dust from the feet of the heroes, and they smote one another so fiercely that the clang of sword-strokes on shield and helm was like the sound of hammers in a forge.

CHAPTER XXI

GUDRUN AND ORTRUN

Hartmut and Wate were fighting close beneath the walls of the castle, and Hartmut could hear his mother making promises of rich reward to any who would slay Gudrun and her women. One base wretch, tempted by her offers, bust into the hall upon the maidens, who fled shrieking to the windows; whereupon Hartmut, divining what had happened, lowered his sword and stepped back a pace. Seeing their danger, and also how his sister Ortrun in the fury of despair had forced the murderer to the balcony, he shouted in thundering tones: "Vile miscreant! what dost thou there amid the maidens? Touch not a hair of their heads, or, by my faith, thou shalt pay dearly for it, thou and all thy kin!

The terrified murderer slunk away, and once more the fight went on. But now both Danes and Normans joined in the strife, and the two heroes were forced asunder in spite of all their efforts.

When Ortrun from the window saw how fast her brother's followers were falling, she hastened to Gudrun and sank at her feet, wringing her hands and crying: "Have mercy, I pray thee, noble princess! Bethink thee how thou didst suffer when they slew thy father, and to-day hath mine fallen by the swords of thy friends. Our bravest knights are slaughtered, and even now my brother Hartmut is in peril of his life before Count Wate!"

Gudrun embraced the kneeling maiden and said kindly: "Never hast thou done me wrong, and gladly would I aid thee in thy need. But how may I part them? Were I a knight and could bear arms, then would I hasten down and save thy brother. But I will do what I can." Going to the window she waved her white kerchief. Well for Hartmut was it that Herwig

chanced to be so close at hand, for when he saw Gudrun's signal, he sprang to the walls.

"If thou dost love me, noble Herwig, then save King Hartmut from Count Wate's fury!" she cried.

"Gladly will I serve thee, dearest maid," replied Herwig, and turning to his knights, he shouted: "On with our banner to Count Wate's side, my comrades!"

But it was not easy to reach Wate through the press, and Herwig cried to him from afar, "Gudrun beseeches thee, brave Wate, to forbear thy strife. She offers peace to Hartmut "

But filled with the fury of battle, Wate answered: "Am I to be led by women's words, forsooth? Nay, that were shame! Never will I spare the foe till Hartmut hath atoned for his misdeed."

And as Herwig sprang forward to part the combatants the infuriated champion dealt him a blow that stretched him on the earth. But therewith Herwig's men pressed hotly on and Hartmut and Wate were forced apart. Hartmut and a great number of his knights were made prisoners, disarmed, and taken to the ships.

CHAPTER XXII

RETRIBUTION

A general assault was now begun on the castle. The knights whom Hartmut had left behind defended it bravely, sending down showers of bolts and flinging huge beams and stones upon the besiegers, but Wate was not to be driven back. With their battle-axes his men hewed the massive bolts from the walls, and the gates at last fell crashing inward. At the same time Horant with the Queen's banner forced the walls in another place and Ortwin had also gained them by means of a siege ladder. The conflict soon spread to the courtyard and thence to the halls and passages, till the whole castle was filled with the din of battle. Chests and presses were broken open in the search for the treasures Ludwig had once carried off from Hegelingen, and enough gold and silver, silks and fine linens, were gathered together to fill two ships.

Ortrun took refuge in Gudrun's chamber. "Alas! dear friend," she cried, "thy people are slaying all they meet within the castle. In pity protect me, or I too must die."

Gudrun took her by the hand, saying tenderly: "Never shalt thou lack aid from me, dear Ortrun. Indeed, from my heart I wish thee peace and happiness. Remain here with my maidens."

Soon Gerlinda came flying in. Forgetful of her pride and arrogance she fell on her knees before Gudrun, crying: "Mercy, mercy, most noble Queen! Save me from Wate and his warriors, I implore thee!"

Gudrun answered sternly: "How dost thou ask me to protect thee? Didst thou ever listen to my prayers for mercy? Methinks 'tis little cause I have to show thee favor!"

Therewith Wate himself burst into the hall, blood streaming from his great beard and staining his armor. Much

as Gudrun was attached to the old hero, it displeased her that he should force his way into the women's apartments like a raging wild boar; yet she approached and greeted him, while the maidens shrank back, terror-stricken.

Wate bowed before her, saying: "Tell me who are these women here with thee?"

"This is my friend Ortrun," replied Gudrun, "good and kind hath she ever been to me, and with her are her maids. The rest are those poor damsels who were stolen with me from Hegelingen."

As Wate was about to approach them to seek for Gerlinda, she cried: "Nay—look how thou dost drip with blood! Surely 'tis not thus that thou shouldst appear before fair dames!" Whereat Wate turned away angry and went back to his comrades who were still fighting in the hall.

Scarcely had he departed when the unfaithful Heregart rushed in with pallid cheeks and streaming hair, and falling at Gudrun's feet begged for mercy. But Gudrun said sharply: "Get thee from my sight, thou false one! What troubles didst thou ever share with me? Rather hast thou added to them!"

Still Heregart pleaded so piteously that at last she said: "Conceal thyself then among Ortrun's damsels, if thou wilt; no longer art thou worthy of a place with those thou hast so faithlessly abandoned."

Wate meanwhile was searching everywhere for Queen Gerlinda and presently came once more to the hall, shouting wrathfully: "Lady Gudrun, deliver up to me that infamous woman who did force thee to wash her garments, whose vile deeds have caused thee so much woe!"

Gerlinda was hidden behind the maidens, but Gudrun would not betray her. "She is not here," was her only reply.

This only added to the hero's fury. "Then will I slay every woman here!" he shouted, "so that she shall not escape me."

Whereupon Gudrun's women turning pale with fright drew apart and exposed the fugitive.

"Ha!" he cried, dragging the trembling Queen forth by the hand, "hast thou aught else to be washed by the daughter of my Queen?"

Therewith he seized his victim by the hair and struck off her head. The maidens shrieked aloud at this sight, but Wate turned to them once more and said: "Now would I fain see her who was false to you, for she too must die!"



GUDRUN'S DELIVERANCE.

Gudrun was silent, but a glance from her eyes showed him which was the guilty one. Heregart prostrated herself before him and besought him to spare her life, but he cried: "Well do I know how to deal with women. 'Tis for that I am chamberlain!" And so saying, he swung his sword, and the head of the unfaithful maiden rolled upon the floor.

The fighting was now over; and soon Herwig and Ortwin entered the hall, followed by their comrades. The two Kings had laid aside their blood-stained armor, and Gudrun greeted them tenderly, embracing them with tears of joy. Then she gave her hand to her companions, saying: "Never will I be unmindful of your devotion, so long as I do live!" And all felt how true were her words.

Wate, whose fury had not yet subsided, wished to fire the castle, but Frute opposed it, saying: "What, then, would the women do for shelter till the time of our return? Moreover, the castle doth afford us safe and ample lodgment. But let us make way with the dead who lie about the halls and passages, and cleanse the walls from blood, that our dear lady's eyes be not offended with the sight thereof."

So the bodies were all borne to the shore and, with their armor, cast into the sea. Hartmut was taken to the ships in chains. Gudrun had saved his life, but she had not been able to obtain further concession from her brother and betrothed. Ortrun, however, was allowed to remain with her. Some of the knights with their followers went farther into the kingdom and stormed twenty-six castles, returning to Gudrun laden with treasure and bringing many captives.

After a joyous meeting, Ortwin cried: "Well hath our journey ended. Beyond our dearest hopes have we succeeded; and never will I forget, my gallant comrades, how loyally you have striven in our cause."

"Time passes," said Wate, "let us hasten to restore Queen Hilda's daughter to her."

Preparations for departure were soon made. The booty was placed on the ships, and all hearts beat high with joy at the thought of home. Ortrun followed Gudrun, weeping bitterly, but Hartmut was taken on another vessel with five hundred of his knights. He offered to pledge his life in token of loyalty if they would leave him in the land of his fathers. But Wate answered: "'Tis thyself we would have. In truth, I know not

why Ortwin bears with him to his own land one who even yet would gladly have his life; yet so it is. Were it for me to say, forsooth, thou shouldst have speedy deliverance from all thy troubles."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE HOME COMING

For a whole year Queen Hilda heard no news from the fleet that had sailed away to rescue Gudrun. Each day she ascended the battlements of her castle Matalan to watch for some sign of the returning ships. One bright May morning, when the green meadows were gay with flowers and the sea was as blue as the sky above it, as she stood thus gazing out over the smooth water, suddenly a snow-white sail appeared on the far horizon,—then another, and yet another, till a whole fleet came into view. Hastily descending from the tower, she betook herself with her women to the shore, which was soon thronged with eager men and women and children, and joyous shouts arose as they recognized the devices on the sails. Nearer and nearer came the ships. Brightly shone the sun on helm and armor; banners fluttered in the breeze; drums, trumpets, flutes, and cymbals made exultant music.

Wate's ship was first to reach the land, and the hero sprang ashore, Irolt and Frute following. Reverently they approached and bowed before the Queen, who greeted them and asked for her children.

"God hath aided thee," said Wate. "On yonder ship that now doth approach the shore are Gudrun and Ortwin; also Herwig, thy daughter's brave betrothed!"

Then the Queen raised her hands to Heaven, tears of joy streaming down her cheeks as her dear ones stepped once more upon their native shore, followed by all the knights and maidens. Ortwin and Herwig placed Gudrun in her mother's arms, who clasped her child to her as if she could never let her go. So great was the joy of both at this reunion that even stern warriors were forced to shed tears at the sight thereof. After Hilda had exchanged greetings with her son and Herwig, Gudrun led forth a tall noble damsel from the group of

women. "Take her also to thy heart, my mother," she cried, "for a good friend hath she been to me."

"Nay," said the Queen, "I embrace no damsel who is unknown to me."

But Gudrun whispered: "Thou must greet her, mother. 'Tis King Ludwig's orphan child."

"How!" cried Hilda, sharply. "She the daughter of the Norman King? Oh, what evil hath been dealt me by her house!" And turning angrily to Ortrun, who stood silent before her, she pointed to the site of the castle, which still lay in ruins.

"Behold the work of thy kin!" she said. "Yet there are still dungeons beneath yon pile that shall well serve for thee!"

Gudrun burst into tears at this; but Ortwin said reprovingly: "Nay, dear mother, thou shouldst not speak thus to Ortrun. She meriteth not such anger in her grief."

And Gudrun added: "Truly, had it not been for her, I never again should have held thee in my arms!"

Then Hilda's wrath melted, and giving her hand to Ortrun, she kissed her, saying: "If this be true, thy kindness shall meet with rich reward from us."

Then Gudrun led Hildburg to her mother. "Thou must thank this maiden also," she said, "for she hath been a loyal friend to me and shared in all my troubles."

"Truly, my child," replied the Queen, "she shall not lack the reward of the faithful."

After all the other heroes had been welcomed, she led the way back to the castle, where a sumptuous repast was prepared. Hartmut was left to languish in his chains, however, and Gudrun bethought her how she might bring all to a happy issue, for she greatly desired that a lasting peace should be established between the two countries. Accordingly, the next

day, after all in the castle had risen from the board, she said to Ortwin:

"Hearken, dear brother, to the counsel I would give thee, for great advantage shalt thou reap thereby. I would have thee take Ludwig's daughter Ortrun as thy wife. Truly never wilt thou find a truer heart on earth!"

"Indeed, most good and noble she doth seem to me," replied Ortwin, "but we have slain her father and her mother; methinks at my side she would know but little joy!"

"Nay, let thy love teach her to forget her sorrows," cried Gudrun.

When Ortwin had agreed to her plan, she sent for Herwig and told him what was purposed; whereat he was greatly pleased, and said: "Aye, let us make it our care that there shall evermore be peace betwixt the Normans and ourselves."

Then Gudrun went to the Queen and besought Hartmut's freedom. Hilda at first refused to grant it, but Gudrun pleaded with her mother, till at last she agreed that he should have his liberty so that he remained unarmed. Soon Hartmut entered the hall, bearing himself with his wonted pride and with undaunted courage, though he knew not whether life or death was to be his portion. But every one who saw him admired the brave hero.

"Let me speak with him apart," said Gudrun; and leading him into the embrasure of a window she began: "If thou wilt follow the counsel I would give thee, noble Hartmut, 'twill make an end of all thy troubles."

"Well do I know thy virtue, fairest princess," replied Hartmut, "and that thou wouldst counsel naught but what is right or in accordance with my honor."

"Then help us to establish peace between our houses for all time," continued Gudrun. "My brother Ortwin will wed Ortrun, and do thou take the Lady Hildburg for thy Queen. No

nobler maid is there in all the land; and if thou dost make her thy wife, she will be ever true and loyal to thee, even as she was to me in my hours of sorrow."

"So be it," replied Hartmut; "if thou seest fit that thy brother should take my sister as his wife, then will I wed the noble Lady Hildburg."

Overjoyed, Gudrun hastened to make the good news known to Hildburg and Ortrun, whose hearts she already knew were well disposed to the heroes. In the presence of Queen Hilda and all the court the two happy pairs plighted their troth, and there was great rejoicing among the knights. Even old Wate laid aside his enmity and gave his hand to Hartmut and Ortrun.

Soon thereafter the nuptials were celebrated and peace was sealed between the two countries by solemn oaths. The reconciliation thus brought about by Gudrun proved of lasting benefit to the people. Her name was always spoken by them with reverence. Her courage and constancy and virtues were extolled by them, and in after days her fame was as radiant as the stars in the heavens.